DELAWARE

BY G. P. R. JAMES.

1/-

George Paine Rainsford James (1801-1860), historical novelist, was born in London. He was a most voluminous author. From 1852 to 1858 he was British Consul at Richmond, Virginia, but in the latter year was appointed Consul at Venice. "Delaware," subsequently published under the title "Thirty Years Since," first appeared in 1848.

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DELAWARE

OR

THE RUINED FAMILY

BY G. P. R. JAMES

AUTHOR OF "DARNLEY"

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G. P. R. JAMES'S NOVELS.

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Arrah Neil
My Aunt Pontypool

DELAWARE.

CHAPTER I.

From a hotel in Piccadilly, at about half-past five o'clock on the morning of the last day of August, one thousand eight hundred and something, set out a hackney-coach, containing within its sphere of rotten wood and rusty leather a small portmanteau on the front seat, and the portmanteau's master on the other. He was a well-made youth, of about five-and-twenty years of age, with firm, graceful, and yet powerful limbs, and a fresh, clear complexion. His eye was blue and bright, and the clustering curls of fair hair—as pure Saxon as Sharon Turner's last new book—might have looked somewhat girlish, had it not been for the manly features and the free, dauntless look that they overshadowed. At the same time, be it remarked that there was something of melancholy, if not of gloom, in his aspect; but that did not prevent him—after the chambermaid had been satisfied, and the waiter had been paid, and boots had had his fees, and the porter had claimed more than his due, and, in short, all the exactions of an inn had been played off upon him in succession—that did not prevent him, when fairly rolling away towards the top of the Haymarket, from gazing out upon the scene around him with a sufficient degree of open-eyed curiosity to make the waterman stick his tongue into his cheek, and mentally denominate him "a raw."

The coach rolled at the statute pace along Piccadilly, unobstructed by anything, and, indeed, unencountered by anything but two slow market-carts, wending heavily towards Covent Garden, and another fac-simile of itself, just overcoming—in order to take up some other early passenger—the vis inertiae which had held it on the straw-littered stand for the last hour. In the Haymarket, however, the progression was more difficult; for there already had congregated many a loaded cart,

the drivers of which, as usual, had, with skilful zeal, contrived to place them as a regular fortification, obstructing every step of the way. Gin and purl, too, were reeking up to the sky from the various temples of the rosy god that line the west side of the street; and amidst the bargainings of some early dealers, and the pæans of the gin-drinkers, no one attended to the objurgations of the embarrassed coachman. Nevertheless, all these difficulties were at length removed by one means or another; and Cockspur Street opened wide before the traveller, exposing at the end, black with the smoke of fires innumerable, the famous Statue and the girthless horse. On one side, wide and open, lay Whitehall, with all those offices whence many a time has issued the destiny of the world; on the other hand, dark and dingy, wound away the Strand, with the house of the Percys maintaining still the last aspect of a feudal dwelling to be found in London. The King's Mews, on which a violating hand had hardly yet been laid, occupied all the space to the left; and the flaming ensign of the Golden Cross, stuck up in front of a tall narrow-fronted house, told that the place of many coaches was before the traveller's eyes.

He found, on alighting, that he had arrived at least ten minutes before the time; and after having been cheated, as usual, by the hackney coachman, and gazed about the dull desolate yard, shut in by the high houses round, in the far shadows of which stood two or three red, blue, and yellow vehicles, all unpacked and unhorsed, he once more sauntered out through the low-browed arch which gave admission to the court, and amused himself with the wider scene exhibited by the street.

The first thing that his eyes fell upon, as he turned round, was a dark brown cabriolet, whirled along with the speed of lightning by a tall bay horse, full of blood and action, and covered with harness, which, though somewhat elaborate and evidently costly, was guarded by scrupulous good taste from being gaudy. Behind the vehicle appeared a smart active boy in groom's apparel, but with no distinctive livery to designate him as the tiger of Colonel this, or the Earl of that, though a cockade in his hat told that his master pretended to either military or naval rank. Where the young traveller stood, the appearance of the driver was not to be discerned; but, from the style of the whole turn-out, he began to doubt that his anticipations in regard to their approaching companionship were fallacious, when, dashing up to the pavement, the horse was suddenly drawn up, the groom sprang to the head, and the person within at length made his appearance.

He was a young man of about seven-and-twenty, tall, and rather gracefully than strongly made; but still with a breadth of chest, and a sort of firm setting on his feet, which spoke a greater degree of personal strength than appeared at a casual glance. His clothes were all of that peculiar cut which combines the most decided adherence to the prevailing fashion, with a very slight touch of its extravagance. Everything, however, in the whole of his apparel, was in good keeping, as the painters call it; and though the colours that appeared therein was such as no one but a man of rank and station in society would have dared to wear, the general hue of the whole was dark.

"He's a dandy!" thought the young traveller, with a somewhat contemptuous curl of the lip, as the other descended from the cabriolet; but the moment after, hearing him bid the boy tell Swainson not to forget to give Brutus a ball on Wednesday night, and to walk Miss Liddy for an hour twice every day in the park, he concluded that he was a gentleman horse-jockey—a thing, in his unsophisticated ideas, equally detestable with a dandy. Scarcely had he come to this conclusion—and his conclusions, be it remarked, were formed very quickly—when the stranger strode rapidly past him. The cabriolet drove away, and its owner—with a quantity of glossy black hair escaping from under his hat, and mingling with whiskers more glossy still—entered the inn-yard, and proceeded to the coach-office.

The other traveller followed, in hopes of seeing some signs of approaching departure; and, as he did so, he heard the reply of the book-keeper to something which the owner of the cabriolet had asked. "No room outside, sir;—very sorry, indeed—got our full number,"—he had got three more, by the way,—"plenty of room inside. That 'ere gentleman's going inside, 'cause he can't get room out."

"Well, inside be it then," replied the other.

The book-keeper began to write. "What name, sir?"

"Burrel!" replied the stranger.

"Any luggage?"

"None," answered Burrel.

"One pound ten shillings and sixpence, sir, if you please!" said the book-keeper; and, as Burrel paid the money, the coachman's cry of "Now, gentlemen, if you please!" sounded through the yard.

In another minute the horses were dashing through that antique and abominable arch, which, in days of yore, gave egress and regress to the Golden Cross, while Burrel and the other traveller, seated side by side, held their breath as the rough vehicle clattered over the London stones. It has often

been remarked, that it is wonderful how much shaking together two Englishmen require before they speak to each other; and, in setting out from a town like London, there is scarcely an individual who has not too much to think of—either in parting from well-loved friends—in quitting scenes of pleasure or of pain—in self-congratulation on escaping from smoke and noise—in anticipation of quiet and repose, of joyful meetings and smiles of welcome—not to court a few minutes' calm reflection as they leave behind them that great misty den of feelings and events. Our two travellers then leaned back in their respective corners, without the interchange of a word—the one, Burrel, apparently buried in deep thought; and the other too proud, if not too shy, to begin any conversation himself, even had he not had memories enough in his bosom to furnish him, also, with food for meditation. Such, however, he had; and—seeing that his companion appeared wrapped up in that sort of gentlemanly reserve which so often covers over a man's eyes, ears, and understanding, as he goes through life, and leaves him, like the Grand Lama, with nothing to speculate upon but his own perfections—the younger traveller gave way also to his thoughts, and, ere they had reached Brentford, had forgotten that there was any being in the coach but himself.

His reflections did not seem very pleasant; for at Hounslow, what appeared to be the first act thereof ended in a sigh so long and deep, that it attracted the notice of his fellow-traveller, who turned his head, and, for the first time, examined him somewhat attentively, as he sat looking out of the windows, with the objects as they passed skimming hardly noted before his eyes. The second act of the young man's thoughts did not seem quite so abstracted as the first; for when the coach stopped for a few minutes at Staines, he put his head forth from the window, and demanded the name of the place, addressing Mynheer Boots, who gazed in his face and answered nothing.

"This is Staines," replied his hitherto silent companion, in a mild and gentlemanly tone, in which there was not the slightest touch of coxcombry or affectation; "perhaps you have never travelled this road before?"

"I have, indeed," replied the other; "but the first time was many years ago; and when last I passed, I had various things to think of, which prevented my noting particularly the places through which I travelled."

"Oh, anything on earth to think of," replied Burrel, "of course renders travelling out of the question. It is no longer travelling, it is locomotion.—It becomes the act of a stage-coach, a steam-engine, or any other machine, as soon as a

person has one thought occupied by either business or memory, or any one of the troublesome things of the world. Before one sets out on a journey, one should shake out one's mind, as the ancient pilgrims did their wallets, and leave no trace of friends, or relations, or feelings, or prejudices, or remembrances of any kind in short, to hang about it; but make all void and clear for the new stock of ideas that are to be placed in it."

"Yours is a strange doctrine," replied his companion, "though I believe it might be as well to practise it."

"Why, if a man carries about in his mind," continued Burrel, "his uncles and aunts, and sisters and brothers, and all the luggage of associations that they bring along with them, he might as well jog on in the old family coach at the rate of forty mortal miles per day, from the town house in Berkeley Square to the country house in Staffordshire. But let a man resolve to forget everything on earth but the scenes through which he is passing, and he will find as much to interest, and amuse, and excite him—ay, and as much to the purpose of real information too—between London and Dorchester, as between Paris and the Dardanelles."

His companion smiled, perhaps as much from surprise at the very unexpected tone of his fellow-traveller's tirade, as from any acquiescence in the tirade itself. "Nay, nay," he said, "surely you won't deny that—putting all other advantages out of the question between the two journeys you mention—there is still much more picturesque beauty to be found between Paris and the Dardanelles than between London and Dorchester?"

"I do not know that," replied Burrel. "There may be newer scenery, and perhaps more sublime scenery; but whether the more sublime be calculated to produce a finer or sweeter effect upon a man's heart and mind than softer and gentler pictures, I much doubt. There is something in an English landscape to be found nowhere else—an air of rich, sweet, happy repose—of safe tranquillity and successful industry, that is in itself almost sublime. Let your eye now run over that view as the coach climbs the hill. Where did you ever behold a scene on which sight can so pleasantly repose?—The rich scattered wood in front, full of Old England's grand primeval oaks.—Then look how, bending over a thousand slopes, in the true lines of beauty, the hedgerows wind along, dividing wealthy field from field—now giving skips and glances of fair towns and uplands, and now massing together, till the eye believes them to be deep groves—then that catch of the river, glistening under the hill, while the

sunshine streams through the valley, and that broad shadow of some cloud we do not see, passes slowly on—at every change that it effects in the light and shade of the landscape, bringing out some new beauty, as if it itself delighted in the loveliness it produces. Then again, cast your eyes up yondet to the village church hanging halfway down the hill, with its neat parsonage embowered in tall elms; and looking, as it is, the abode of peace and virtue. As good a man dwells there as the whole world can produce, and a true representative the great majority of the much-belied English clergy. B say, did you ever see a fairer scene?"

"Seldom, indeed," replied his companion, whose attentio called to the principal points of a purely English pictur found more beauties in it than custom suffered him to see before. "But still," he added, "I am fond of mountain scenery."

"And so am I," replied Burrel. "I am fond of every kind of scenery, from the bold blue mountain with its purple heath, as bare, as naked, and as wild as the banks of Loch Awe itself can show, to the rich and undulating plains of Champagne, where soft line beyond line of faint and fainter shadows, vanishing away in Claude-like sunshine, are all that mark the wide extent over which the eye can roam. There is such a thing as the economy of admiration; and by husbanding that faculty properly, you will not find a scene in all the world on which you cannot afford to bestow some small portion thereof."

The other traveller replied, not a little pleased to find that all the fine sketches which he had been making of his companion's character, during the earlier part of their journey, were as empty as a protocol; and, with the very natural jump which man's heart takes when it finds itself agreeably disappointed in the estimation it had formed of another, perhaps the stranger now felt as much inclined to over-admire his companion, as he had before been disposed to undervalue him. A growing remembrance of his features, too, for some time made him fancy that he had met with an old friend, whose face, like a worn piece of money, though half obliterated by time, was still sufficiently plain to tease memory—one of those provoking recollections, as tenacious as remorse, and inactible as a soufflet. After some further conversation, and one or two thoughtful pauses—in which Memory was so busy in digging amongst the ruins of the past to see if she could find the name of Burrel, that she would not even let the young traveller's loquacious powers go on, for fear of disturbing her search—he suddenly exclaimed, with that degree of frank

simplicity which at once spoke him but little a child of the great world, "Oh! now I remember where it was I saw you before?"

"Where?" demanded Burrel, with a slight smile, which he instantly repressed, lest he should give pain.

But the young stranger was not of a nature to think there could be anything wrong or absurd in acknowledging whatever he felt, if what he felt were pure and natural. "It was at the door of Lord Ashborough, in Grosvenor Square," he replied at once. "You were coming out as I was going in to call for his lordship. It was but yesterday; and yet I have been searching through many long years to find out where it was I had seen you before."

"Memory is like the philosophers," replied Burrel, "and often sends out far to seek what she might stumble over at her own door. I now remember your face also, and think I heard you give your name as Captain Delaware."

"The same," answered his companion, with somewhat of a sigh. "Do you know Lord Ashborough well?"

"I have known him long," replied Burrel; "but to know a man well is a very different thing; for I am afraid that all men have learned now-a-days what Sallust regrets in the decline of the Romans—'magis vultum quam ingenium, bonum habere.' Not that I mean to say it is so with Lord Ashborough — far from it. He bears a high character in the world, and is esteemed upright, honourable, and talented, though somewhat stern and haughty."

A grave and rather melancholy expression came over the countenance of the other; and he replied, changing the subject abruptly, "You were speaking of the Dardanelles. Were you ever there?"

"Never," answered Burrel, "though once within little more than a hundred leagues. I should have been well pleased to have gone on; but circumstances called me back to England."

"I have been there," replied the other; "and there is nothing more delightful on earth than the sail from Corfu to Constantinople—except, indeed, some parts of the coast of Sicily."

"You are a naval man, then, I presume?" said Burrel. The other answered in the affirmative, and his companion proceeded.

——"For nothing on earth could be more disagreeable to me, and I suppose to most landsmen, than a sail from any one given point of the globe's surface to another. When you speak of Sicily, however, you speak of a land that I too

know well; and in regard to which I can enter into your enthusiasm. There are few lands more fertile in beauties of nature and association than Sicily, and Epicurean Calabria, and the old Etruscan groves! You have of course visited Italy, if you so well know Sicily?"

"I have done little more than cruise along the coast," replied Captain Delaware; "but in Sicily I was landed, and remained some months for the recovery of my health."

"Oh, the sweet coasts of the Mediterranean Sea!" said Burrel, "where at every league there is some beauty and some memory—some pleasant dream of the present or the past—from the Imperial City and its wolf-suckled founder, to the grey majesty of Pæstum and the Calabrese peasant with his long gun and his Mother Goose hat, caroling his gay ditty as cheerfully as a pickpocket."

"You are an enthusiast, I see," replied the other, with a smile.

"When I am in company with one," answered Burrel, laughing. His companion coloured slightly, but good-humouredly, and the conversation went on in the same easy manner in which it had commenced, through the rest of their journey. It is unnecessary to give any further details thereof, for such light nothings, though very pleasant to while away the hours in a stage-coach, are most excessively tiresome in the small pages of an octavo. Let it suffice that Captain Delaware, surprised and pleased with his companion, found the journey far shorter than he had expected. Indeed, so captivated was he, that in the whole of Burrel's deportment there was but one thing he thought might have been altered to advantage, which was a certain air of taking everything as a matter of course—a tone of indifference which men of the world acquire they know not well how, and which, in the present instance, blended in an extraordinary manner with the high feeling of the beautiful and the excellent which his conversation breathed throughout.

"That seems a splendid park!" said Burrel, as his eye first lighted on it. "Do you know what it is called?"

"Emberton Park," replied the young sailor, briefly.

"And belongs to ——?" said Burrel.

"Sir Sidney Delaware, my father," answered the young man, with so deep a sigh that Burrel asked no further questions.

After dragging the wheel, the coach ran rapidly down the descent, and then rolling on, stopped at a neat, clean house, with a small garden in the front. At the little white gate were four fine setters, with a servant out of livery, who in-

stantly touched his hat to Burrel, and, approaching the door, said, "This is the house, sir."

"Very well," answered Burrel; "and now farewell, Captain Delaware," he said, turning to his companion, and giving him his hand with as much frank good-humour as if he had addressed an old acquaintance; "I doubt not we shall meet again."

Delaware grasped his hand without reply, and the other alighted. All his dogs sprang up to greet him with evident joy, much to the detriment of his clothes, but little to that of his good-humour, and after gazing up and down the road for a moment, as one does in a strange place, he walked through the little gate and entered the house, at the door of which stood a tidy old lady, evidently curtseying to a new lodger.

The coach drove on; and then again stopped at the lodge of the park, where Captain Delaware alighted also. His portmanteau was given to the woman at the lodge; and he himself, with a quick step, walked up the path which led to the mansion.

CHAPTER II.

The person who has figured before the reader during a long day's journey in a stage-coach under the name of Burrel, entered the small neat house we have before described; and, after having considered attentively with his eyes all the proportions and dimensions of the little parlour which was to be his sitting-room, he seated himself before the antique, and somewhat obscure, mahogany table that it contained, and addressed his servant—who had followed into the room, together with the decent, respectable landlady—pronouncing those two important but somewhat laconic words, "Get dinner!"

The man bowed, and left the room without reply, and Burrel proceeded, speaking to the landlady, who was beginning to fear, from certain symptoms that she saw, that both master and man were equally taciturn. "Well, my good lady," he said, "my man has doubtless arranged everything with you, and I hope you are satisfied with the bargain he has made?"

"Yes, sir!" replied the Widow Wilson, as the good dame was denominated. "There was but one word to that bargain, I can assure you."

"I suppose so," said Burrel, dryly, "if Harding concluded it. But tell me—that is a beautiful park opposite the window; who does it belong to?"

"That, sir, is Emberton Park!" replied the landlady, looking unutterable things at Burrel's ignorance. "You must have heard tell of Sir Sidney Delaware, Bart., of Emberton Park, surely?"

"I think I have heard the name," replied Burrel. "What family has he?"

"Lord bless me, sir! you came down with his own son," answered the old lady, more and more surprised at her lodger's ignorance of village facts, and beginning greatly to undervalue his understanding. "Why, I saw the Captain's head as plainly as possible when you got out of the coach."

"Indeed!" said Burrel, with gravity not to be shaken; "and is he an only child?"

"Oh, no, sir, no!" answered Mrs. Wilson. "Sir Sidney has a young lady, too. Himself, his son, and his daughter—that is all of them, poor people!"

"Poor people!" exclaimed Burrel; "I should think they were rich people, with such a fine estate as that."

"Ah, sir, things that show best are not always as they look!" replied the good woman. "They are as poor as church-mice, sir, and that's poor enough. I wish to God they were richer—much good would they do! But I have heard Lawyer Johnstone say, that, with all the fine estate, Sir Sidney, when all is paid, has not four hundred a-year of his own; and gentility without ability is like a pudding without plums! Then there is the Captain's half-pay, you know; and if they could let the house and park, it might bring something more. They tried one year, and went and lived at a cottage down at Sidmouth—but it did not let, and the place was going to ruin—and so they came back; for, though there are not many of them, yet two or three in a house are better than none at all."

"That is very true," said Burrel; "very true, indeed; and now, my good lady, see if my man has taken up the hot water to the dressing-room."

The good woman took the hint, and retired.

Burrel sat down to his dinner, which he concluded with an excellent appetite, and in perfect silence. This state of meditation continued unbroken till the cloth disappeared, and the silent servant, placing the inviolate bottle of comet claret before him—a supply of which, by the way, had been sent down to the coach-office ten days before, arguing, the lawyers would infer, a predetermination to lodge at Emberton—was about to retire, when he was arrested by his master's voice.

"Have you yet," demanded Burrel, musing, "made the inquiries I directed you, Harding?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man, and was again silent.

"Where does he live, then—this Mr. Tims?" asked his master. "How far is it from the village?"

"About a mile and a half, sir," answered Harding; "down a back lane at the end of the park—a very retired place, but easily found."

"And what else did you discover?" continued his master; "I mean in regard to the Delawares?"

"They visit no one, sir—in the village, at least," replied the man, "and receive no one."

"Do any of the family shoot?"

"None, sir,—and they have often given leave to gentlemen staying at the inn, for the mere asking."

"Very well," answered his master. "Now bring me my writing-desk, and some books from the library—the greatest trash you can find."

The man disappeared, and returned with the desk, from which, while he was again absent bringing the trash, in quest of which his master had dispatched him, Burrel took out some notes and accounts, and apparently went over the latter with the accurate attention of a man of business. He then wrote a brief note, which he folded and sealed, and giving it to Harding on his return, bade him deliver it the next morning early, and wait an answer. All this being completed, he took up the first volume that had been brought him, cast himself back in his chair, and skimmed the pages till bedtime.

The breakfast-table was laid out by the neat hands of Mrs. Wilson, exactly at eight o'clock the next morning—the white table-cloth, the jug of rich yellow cream, the two smooth rolls, somewhat browner than the same article of food in London, but doubtless much more the children of the corn—all bespoke a comfortable country breakfast; and when, in about half an hour after, Burrel descended, in shooting guise, he looked round with that air of satisfaction which a man feels, after a long London season, on waking and finding himself really in the country. The hot water, not in the accursed lukewarm urn, but in a kettle hissing hot from the fire, was brought in by Mrs. Wilson; but in about ten minutes Harding himself appeared, and, with his usual silence, presented his master with an answer to his note of the evening before. It ran as follows, and explains both itself and the one to which it replied.

"Emberton Park, Wednesday Morning.

"Sir Sidney Delaware is happy to have the power of affording Mr. Burrel any gratification; and begs to say, that he

is perfectly at liberty to shoot over any part of his property, with the exception of the grounds in the immediate vicinity of the house, the game on which he wishes to preserve."

"Hum!" said Burrel, shaking his head as he read the note. "Whom did you see, Harding?"

"A maid-servant, sir," replied the man, "and the old gentleman himself."

"Did he say nothing about calling on me?" demanded Burrel; "or being happy to see me?"

"Nothing, sir," replied the man; and, with an injunction to get his gun ready, and see that the old lady did not give the dogs anything to eat before they went out, his master dismissed him.

"We must find some means," said Burrel to himself, when the servant was gone; "but I am afraid it will be more difficult than I thought——But the young man will call, of course."

Now, though it would be very easy to look into the mind of Henry Burrel, Esq., as he there stands pondering, with his hand leaning on the table, yet it may be better to pursue him a little further ere we take such a liberty, and see him set forth upon his shooting expedition, in the course of which he approached as near to the mansion of Emberton Park as he decently could. His expedition was solitary, however; and if he expected or hoped to meet any of the family, he was disappointed. No one did he see but an occasional shepherd, and a hedger and ditcher; and at three o'clock he returned home, with nothing to repay his walk but ten brace of birds.

The following morning it was no better; but Burrel seemed resolved upon another line of conduct, and, at the risk of seeming to intrude, he called at the house itself as he passed, and, on finding that its owner was from home, left a card with his compliments, and thanks for the permission which had been granted him. "They will perhaps think me a presuming coxcomb," he thought; "but I care not." The next day, in crossing the fields with his dogs and his gun as usual, he suddenly met his stage-coach companion, Captain Delaware, with a young lady leaning upon his arm, whom, from a certain family likeness, he at once concluded to be the sister of his acquaintance. Her dress was as plain as possible; but the model was good, and no one could have doubted that she was a lady, though it is probable that the walking-dress of the mercer's daughter at Emberton was beyond comparison more fashionable—in price. Her figure was extremely good, though, Heaven be praised, not at all sylph-like; and all that

Burrel remarked was, that she was a very pretty girl, and had a very pretty foot. Her brother stopped for a moment, and with a countenance in which various emotions, strangely mingled, of pleasure and pain, called up an eloquent glow, he hoped that Burrel had met with good sport, introduced him to his sister, Miss Delaware, and then, in a manner somewhat abrupt and embarrassed, bade him good-by, and turned away.

Burrel walked on with his gun under his arm; and for a minute, as he did so, he bit his nether lip, and his brow slightly contracted. The moment after, however, he laughed, lightly murmuring, "Well, I must have recourse to the old miser, after all, though I hate his instrumentality;" and, turning on his heel, he sauntered back towards his own abode.

He was suffered to enter in peace; but his Manton was scarcely laid on the table, and his dogs given into the charge of his servant, when, to his horror and astonishment, Mr. Tomkins, the surgeon of the village, was announced, and a smart dapper little man, of pale and gentlemanly aspect, made his appearance. Burrel was cool and civil; for it was a part of his code to be civil to every one till they were insolent; and, after the usual symphony concerning the weather, Mr. Tomkins proceeded to the chief motive of his visit.

"He had always," he said, "proposed to call upon Mr. Burrel as soon as his manifold occupations would permit; but he had that day been charged with a commission, which gave so much additional pleasure to his proposed visit, that he of course determined to pay it immediately. The fact was," he added, "that he had that morning been visiting Mrs. Darlington, the lady to whom that beautiful house and those sweet grounds upon the hill belonged, and who, having heard of Mr. Burrel's arrival in Emberton, though she could not of course call upon him herself, had begged the identical Mr. Tomkins, then before him, to say how much pleasure she would have to see him, if he would do her the honour of dining with her on the following day."

She was a widow lady of a certain age, Mr. Tomkins implied, who had all her life moved in the best society, and was the most charming and good-tempered person in the world—"Draws beautifully; has a great taste for music; sees a good deal of company at her house, where the cookery is excellent; does a great deal of good, and takes a vast deal of interest in everything that is doing in the village."

"What a disagreeable person!" thought Burrel. "Nevertheless, I may as well amuse myself with her and hers, as walk about these fields from breakfast till dinner-time, or

read these idiotical romances from dinner till bed-time." He replied, however, according to the letter of the law of civility. "Mrs. Darlington does me a great deal of honour, my dear sir," he said; "and I will do myself the pleasure of accepting her invitation, which I will notify to her forthwith by my servant. Pray, how far may be her house?"

"Oh, not above five miles, certainly," replied the worthy chirurgeon.

"Five miles!" said Burrel; "that is a tremendous way to roll in anything but a cabriolet after eating. I shall certainly die of an indigestion if I trust myself to a hack post-chaise in a state of repletion."

The man of medicines grinned at what in his ears sounded something very like a professional joke, but assured Burrel at the same time that his apprehensions were vain, for that Mrs. Darlington's invitations always implied a bed at her house.

"That alters the case," replied Burrel; "for I expect some horses down to-night, and will ride over, and dress before dinner."

The doctor, who felt that a vast accession of dignity would accrue, if he could expose himself to the wondering eyes of Emberton, in close companionship with the young and fashionable stranger, proposed to drive him over in his pony-chaise; but this honour Burrel declined, replying quietly that he would prefer riding; and, after one or two faint efforts towards discovery of all the hidden things appertaining to the young traveller, the surgeon, finding that the conversation began to fall continually to the ground, took the hint and retired; and Burrel proceeded to change his shooting-dress for one better suited to the town.

Leaving him, however, to make this alteration, and to send off his answer to Mrs. Darlington's invitation, we shall now beg leave to follow home Captain Delaware and his sister, and—as everything in a tale like the present should be as clear as possible, without the slightest mystery or absurd concealment—shall explain a few things that may have hitherto appeared strange in the conduct of that family.

The spot at which Burrel had that morning met his travelling companion, was not more than a quarter of a mile from the mansion, and the brother and sister walked on directly towards one of the smaller doors in the park wall, and, passing through, turned their steps homewards. They proceeded, however, in silence; for there was something evidently in their rencontre with Burrel unpleasant to them both, nor was that unpleasant sensation perhaps relieved by the aspect of their paternal dwelling, or the grounds that

surrounded it. Without entering into the painful details of a family's decay, it is sufficient to say, that the whole place bore the character—not of neglect—but of means incompetent to ward off the constant, unremitting, insidious assaults of time. They passed a temple in the park, which had been built in imitation of some famous specimen of Grecian architecture, and now came nearer still to the original by its decay. A large mass of the frieze had fallen, and over the green and disjointed steps the brambles were shooting their long thorny arms. The path itself, too, which wound on towards the house, was half overgrown with grass; and where an effort to hoe it up had been begun, it had speedily been abandoned, from the necessity of employing the man in some more useful service. The mansion, too, more than half closed, had about it all—not the aspect of ruin, for it had by no means reached that pitch—but a look of desertion and of poverty which contrasted painfully with the splendour of the original design.

To the eye of Miss Delaware and her brother, all this was customary; but yet it struck them both, after their meeting with Burrel, perhaps more forcibly than it had ever done before; and there was something like a sigh escaped the lips of each, as, opening the large door, they passed on into what had once been a splendid vestibule. The day was a sultry one, and the door of a room, entering immediately upon the hall, was open when Captain Delaware and his sister entered. The step of Miss Delaware, as she walked on, caught the ear of some one within, and a voice, in the tone of which there was the slightest possible touch of impatience, was heard exclaiming, "Blanche! is that you, my love?"

The young lady, followed by her brother, immediately turned her steps into the fine old library from which the sound proceeded, and found reading, at a small table near one of the long many-paned windows, a person who—however contrary to rule—deserves a more particular sketch of his mental and corporeal qualities, and of his previous history, than we may find it convenient to give of any other person connected with this book.

Sir Sidney Delaware had set out in life a younger son. His father, Mr. William Delaware, had been a man of great talents, and very little common sense, who, by the help of his abilities, and considerable family influence, had been raised to offices in the State conferring large revenues, which he squandered profusely. Mr. William Delaware, however, kept up the appearance of a man of fortune; and as his uncle, the then possessor of Emberton Park, was unmarried and advanced in life, his prospects were admitted on all

hands, even by Jews and money-lenders, to be good. Be it remarked, nevertheless, that though he was the direct male heir to his uncle's property, there were two other persons who more than equally shared in his uncle's favour—his own first-cousins, and equally the nephews (though by the female line) of the Sir Harcourt Delaware, who then held the lands of Emberton. These were Lord Ashborough and his brother the Honourable Henry Beauchamp. However, he did not let anything disturb him, but continued to live splendidly and well; gave his eldest son a commission in a crack regiment of cavalry, and sent his second son, Sidney, to Christ Church.

At Christ Church there were two or three peculiarities observed in Sidney Delaware. With his scholastic education we shall have nothing to do. The first of these peculiarities was an uncommon degree of accuracy in paying his bills, and living within his income; and his elder brother was wont to say, that Sidney was so sick of seeing nobody paid at home, that he was resolved to pay every one to the uttermost farthing. The next trait remarked by his fellow collegians was his extraordinary good nature; for was any one in difficulty or distress, Sidney Delaware would help him to the very utmost of his power, though in many instances he was known to hate and contemn the very men he assisted; and the third quality was a talent for satire, and a faculty of vituperation, which might have been envied by Gifford amongst the dead, and two or three we could name amongst the living.

The secret of his character, perhaps, was the combination of an extraordinary sensibility of the absurd, with a high and severe moral feeling. He studied for the Church, however; and as he did so, many of the injunctions of that divine book, to which his mind was naturally turned continually, appeared so contrary to the asperity of his sarcastic disposition, that he determined to make a powerful effort to restrain the bitterness of speech and writing to which he had before given way. Time and years, too, had their effect, and the biting satire that used to hang upon his lip remained hidden in silence, or only broke forth casually, when he was off his guard. He tried to banish from his heart that feeling of contempt and scorn which he experienced whenever anything mean, or false, or base, met his eyes; and perhaps the very good-natured facility with which he could be induced to assist any one, might spring from an apprehension lest the scorn he felt for all that was pitiful in others, might affect his own actions, and render him uncharitable himself. His elder brother died before he himself was ordained: and, on the persuasion of his father, he abandoned his purpose of

entering the Church, travelled for several years, and then studied for the bar. His next step was to marry, and he was a widower with two children at the time his father succeeded to Sir Harcourt Delaware. The baronet, however, in dying, had given to his two nephews, Lord Ashborough and Mr. Beauchamp, who had been very constant in their attentions, a far larger share of his fortune than he left to him who was to inherit the baronetcy; and thus, the latter, having counted largely on his future fortune, found himself more embarrassed than relieved by the death of his uncle. The estate that was left to him was also entailed by the will of the last possessor, and his only resource to free himself from the most pressing difficulties, was to engage his son to join him in raising money upon annuity. Sidney Delaware consented with a heavy heart, and the money was borrowed, much against his will, from his father's cousin, Lord Ashborough, between whom and the young heir of Emberton a quarrel had previously taken place, of a nature not likely to admit of reconciliation. For the pitiful sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, the estate of Emberton was charged with an annuity of two thousand per annum; and scarcely had that sum been swallowed up by his father's debts, when Sidney Delaware succeeded to a splendid name and a ruined property.

Griefs and disappointments had impaired his health, had broken his spirit and crushed his energies; and, dwelling almost in solitude, he had given himself up to the education of his children, forgetting that a time would come when the acquaintances which he was losing every day, would become necessary to his children in the world. In bitterness of heart, too, he often thought that his friends were neglecting him, when in fact he was neglecting them; and exclaiming, "Donec eris felix, multos numerabis amicos!" he shut his doors against the world, believing that his poverty would meet with nothing but contempt.

As time wore on, however, he found that he erred in not exerting his abilities, in order to remove the incumbrances which his father had incurred. His son grew up and entered the navy, and half the interest of a small sum, which had been his wife's fortune, afforded sufficient to maintain the boy in that service. But it was when his daughter also grew towards womanhood that Sir Sidney Delaware felt most severely that he had committed an error. His son, he thought, had an honourable profession, and, by his own high merits and activity, was making rapid progress. At the death of Lord Ashborough, too, the annuity which swallowed up almost the whole rents of his estate would lapse, and his heir would have enough. But Lord Ashborough was scarcely an older man

than himself; and when he gazed upon his daughter, and saw her growing up with all her mother's beauty and grace, with every quality fitted to charm and to attach, and at the same time remembered that she was to live cut off from society, during all those brighter days of youth and hope which lie between sixteen and five-and-twenty, he would have given his right hand to have recalled the years which, by active exertion, he might have employed to remove the difficulties that held him down. Now, however, he felt, or persuaded himself, that it was impossible to seek society. He could not mingle with persons in his own rank of life upon an equality, and he would not mingle with any other class, or, with them, in any other manner. Few of these old friends existed for him, on whose generous feelings he could fearlessly rely, and feel certain, from a knowledge of their nature, that no thought even would ever cross their minds which could have wounded him if spoken. Thus, he had no old channel of communication with the world still open, and pride, rendered irritable by disappointment, as well as the circumstances in which he was placed, prevented him from seeking any new connection with society. Could he in any way have given his son and daughter the means of mingling with the world, while he himself shunned it altogether, he would have snatched eagerly at the opportunity; but that of course was out of the question, and day went by after day, and found them all in the same situation.

Such was still the case, at the time of my present tale; and when Miss Delaware and her brother entered the library in which their father was, as usual, driving away thought by reading, they found him seated near the open window with Pope's Essays in his hand. His hair, which had once been dark brown, was now nearly white—in fact, much whiter than his years would warrant. Yet, though the body was in some degree broken, still temperance and fine air had done much to counteract even grief. His countenance was florid, his eye was clear, and he appeared a hale, healthy man, though six or seven years older than he really was.

Long conversations being, like love and marriage, excessively tiresome to every one but those concerned, a summary of what followed will be better than a chapter; and it is quite sufficient to say, that the rencontre of the brother and sister with Mr. Burrel soon became the principal topic of conversation. Captain Delaware, whose loves were very first-sighty, dashed at once into such an encomium of his stage-coach companion, that an arch smile, at this pouring forth of his well-known enthusiasm, played for a moment on the lip of Blanche Delaware. Her father, however, looked grave, and

said he was sorry that they had met him at all. "This young man," he went on, "seems to be a person of fortune and station, whom, in happier times, we might have been delighted to see; but you are well aware, William, that under our present circumstances it is perfectly impossible to invite a man of horses and dogs, and guns and servants, to this house. Did he seem so very charming to you, Blanche?"

Miss Delaware replied, that her brother's acquaintance had not appeared either quite so handsome or quite so fascinating in his shooting-jacket as her brother had described him in his travelling costume.—"But at all events," she added, "his appearance savoured nothing of arrogance or presumption."

"Alas! my dear Blanche," said her father, "you do not know what a man of the world is. Every point in the situation of a poor gentleman is painful, but none so much so, as the having to endure the compassion of fools and puppies."

Captain Delaware turned to the window, and, after looking out for a moment or two, left the room. Blanche remained, but dropped the subject, and it was no more resumed.

CHAPTER III.

After having undergone the visit of the surgeon, Burrel, as we have stated, changed his dress; and, having given some directions to his servant, strolled out alone upon an expedition, in which it may be necessary to follow him. Crossing the bridge—upon which he paused for a moment to gaze up the long vista of the park—he proceeded to the extremity of the wall which formed the enclosure, and then, turning through a shady lane, formed by that boundary on one side, and a steep bank and hedge on the other, he strolled on with an air of absent thoughtfulness.

He walked along under the wall of the park till the park wall ended, and then taking a narrow and overhanging road, which descended into a sweet wild valley—through which a brook meandered on, till it lost itself in the sands upon the sea-shore, about five miles to the east—he proceeded on his way without doubt or question, as if he had known the whole country from his boyhood. The opposite bank of the valley was thickly covered with trees and shrubs; and about half a mile from the spot where the road entered it, the summit of what seemed a tall, old-fashioned farm-house, of cold grey-stone, rose above this sort of verdant screen. Within a few hundred yards of this building, the road climbed the bank, and passed before the door, which was painted of a bluish

grey, like that of a French country house, and offered an aspect of untidiness and discomfort not often seen in an English dwelling. No roses decorated the porch, no clematis festooned the windows; stone walls surrounded that which was, or had been intended for, a garden; and the gruntings and squeaks which echoed from within that boundary, spoke the character of the domestic animals chiefly cultivated at Ryebury.

Undeterred, however, by the inhospitable appearance of the building, or by the wailings of the beast that never chews the cud, Burrel approached the door, and, laying his hand upon a bell, made sure that if any one was within half a mile, he must be heard; and then, turning round to gaze upon the prospect, continued to hum "Dove sono," with which he had been beguiling the way for the last ten minutes. While thus employed, one of the high windows almost immediately above his head was thrown open, and the upper part of a woman-servant, who would have been pretty enough had she not been disguised in indescribable filth, was protruded to reconnoitre the stranger's person. The moment after, another head was added, almost as dirty, but neither pretty nor young, being the dingy white superstructure of an old man's person, who looked not at all unlike Noah, unwashed since the flood.

A long and careful examination did these two respectable persons bestow upon him who so disturbed the quiet of their dwelling, while Burrel, though perfectly conscious, from the groaning of the upheaved window-frame, that he was undergoing a general inspection, continued indefatigably to hum "Dove sono," till, opining that the inquisition had continued sufficiently long, he again applied himself to the bell, which once more responded to his will with "most miraculous organ."

"Run down, Sarah!" cried the elder phantom, "and open the door. Ask him who he is, and what he wants, and then come and tell me. But stay, I will go down with you to the parlour!"

The bell was once more in Burrel's hand, when the door yawned, and displayed to his view a great part of the person and adjuncts dependent upon the female head which had been criticising him from above. It is scarcely necessary to say more than that she was a slut of the first quality, with dirt, ad libitum, spread over the whole person—various triangular tears in the printed cotton that covered her—much white lining protruding through the chasms in her shoes—and a cap as yellow as a pair of court ruffles. Without waiting for the categories that were to be addressed to him, Burrel at once walked into the house; and, telling the dirty maid to inform

her master that Mr. Burrel desired to speak with him, approached the door of the parlour, where the person he sought —not confiding in his servant's powers of recapitulation— was listening with all his ears to the catechism he proposed that the stranger should undergo. As soon, however, as he caught the name of Burrel, he emerged and met that gentleman in the passage with many a bow. His dress was clean enough, and in style and appearance was upon a par with that of a country attorney of about twenty or thirty years ago— black, jet-black, from head to heel, except the worsted stockings, which were dark grey. The whole was well and economically worn, but his face evinced small expense of soap, and his beard that he wore out no razors—upon his chin at least. In person he was a short, thin man, of about sixty-five or six, with a reddish tip to a long nose, set on upon a pale, many-furrowed face. He stooped a little towards the shoulders, and there was that sort of bending droop about the knees which betokens a decrease of vigour. His clear grey eye, however, had something in it both eager and active, and the heavy penthouse of long black and white hair that overhung it, gave a sort of fierce intensity to its glance.

"Your name, sir, is Tims, I presume?" said Burrel, eyeing him with a good deal of that cool nonchalance which is no doubt very disagreeable. The other bowed to the ground, and his visitor continued—"My name is Burrel, and Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, my solicitors, have doubtless written to you concerning——"

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the other, in a subdued voice, at the same time raising his eyebrows, and opening his eyes with a stare of wondering deprecation. "We will speak about it presently, sir, if you please. I received theirs in due course, and expected to have heard of your coming sooner, sir; but shall be very happy, indeed, if we can do business together. Do me the honour, sir, to walk in. Sarah, bring this gentleman a glass of—of—wine," he added, after a moment's hesitation and a glance at the stranger's dress; "but perhaps you would prefer ale, Mr. Burrel, after your walk?"

"I take nothing, sir," answered Burrel, evidently to the great satisfaction of the other; "and having but a few minutes to stay, merely wish to speak with you concerning——"

But his host again cut across him, appearing to think that all matters in which the very name of money was to be mentioned, had better be talked of in private; and hurrying Burrel forward into the parlour, he begged him to be seated, adding almost in the same breath—"Sad times, indeed, sir, as you say—rate of interest falling terribly—hardly four per

cent. to be got on good security—sad times, indeed, sir, as you say!"

"I do not say the times are bad at all, sir," replied Burrel, gravely, "nor that four per cent. cannot be got for money on good security. You must mistake me, I believe, for some more plaintive person. But to the point, Mr. Tims. I think my solicitors wrote to you that I had twenty-five thousand pounds lying uninvested, which I was willing to lend at five or four and a-half per cent. This sum they had heard you were seeking for some gentleman in this neighbourhood who could give good security—Sir Sidney Delaware, I think, was his name."

"Oh but, sir, I am afraid," answered Mr. Tims, shaking his head, "I am afraid that business is off. It won't do, sir, I am afraid—it won't do—can't manage matters there, I am afraid!"

"And pray why not, sir?" demanded Burrel. "I shall not feel very well pleased if I have been brought down here by your report to examine the matter myself, and am disappointed."

"Oh! no fear of that, sir," replied the other: "no fear of finding plenty of others. Besides, I should think, with submission, that you might make Sir Sidney pay—as you say—your expenses, loss of time, &c. &c. He gave me full powers—and as you say——"

"I do not say anything of the kind, sir," replied Burrel, sternly. "Be so good as not to put words into my mouth which I have never spoken. Rather let me hear why, and how, the proposed arrangement cannot have effect, and then we will consider other matters after we have fully canvassed the first."

"Quite right, sir! quite right!" replied Mr. Tims, not in the least discomposed by Burrel's rebuke. "Quite right, indeed! Always right to have everything clear by itself! Why, you must know the simple fact is this. The property of Emberton, as you say, is burdened with an annuity to the amount of two thousand pounds per annum on the life of the present Lord Ashborough, the sum given for which was only twenty-five thousand pounds—and that nearly twenty years ago, when Lord Ashborough was about forty, and his life was worth at least twenty years' purchase. Well, having to speak with Sir Sidney some time ago on some road business, the transaction came up, and I asked him why he did not pay off the annuity, by raising money on mortgage, which he could do at five per cent. His son the Captain, too, was present; and, as the entail ends with the Captain, the matter would be

easily done—though it had never struck them—always provided, nevertheless, that the annuity was redeemable. The arrangement would save them a thousand a-year, you see, sir, and so they agreed to give——"

"To give you how much, sir, for the job?" demanded Burrel.

"Only a fair commission for raising the money," replied the other; "and as Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, your worthy and excellent solicitors, had been making inquiries about this very estate, as it would happen—I cannot think how or why—I wrote to them about it, and the matter was soon arranged; but then Captain Delaware was obliged to go to London to speak with my Lord Ashborough—an excellent gentleman—and on his return it was found that the annuity deed, by some strange accident, contained no clause of redemption. Indeed, none could have been stipulated, for I know the person who drew it, and who is as accurate as Duval."

"And pray, sir, who did draw it?" demanded Burrel.

"My own nephew, sir—Peter Tims, Esq.," replied his companion; "Peter Tims, who succeeded me in my chambers at Clement's Inn; and who was fortunate enough to secure the patronage and friendship of Lord Ashborough."

"Ha!" replied Burrel, drily; "so then you think the annuity cannot be redeemed?"

"Afraid not, sir!" replied the retired lawyer, or, as he was commonly called by the villagers, the miser. "But as I was saying, there are plenty of other mortgages susceptible of mortgage in this neighbourhood, and some," he added, closing one eye, and fixing the other on Burrel's face, with the look of a tame raven that has just hidden a silver spoon, "and some where there is a strong ultimate prospect of a foreclosure and sale at excessive reduction. There is the estate of Sir Timothy Ridout—who wants now to borrow twenty thousand pounds—well worth a hundred. By a little management, one might get hold of it, and——"

"I have no such views, sir," replied Burrel, gravely; "and as the other business cannot apparently be arranged, I shall invest the money in other property. But, tell me, did Lord Ashborough refuse to redeem?"

"Yes, sir! downright!" replied the miser; "and very right, too. He could not get near the interest even now. But you had better think of the business of Sir Timothy Ridout. Such a thing is not to be got hold of every day."

"I shall never give it another thought," replied Burrel, coldly; and, rubbing his boot with his cane, unconscious of

what he was about, he remained for several minutes thinking deeply, while the miser sat upon the edge of his chair, marvelling that any human being could let slip the tempting bait of Sir Timothy Ridout's estate, and beginning to entertain strong doubts as to whether Burrel was really a wealthy man, from the indifference he showed to the prospect of increasing his wealth. "I am sorry," he thought, "that I told that servant of his that he might shoot over the Ryebury fields: I will write to Peter by the next post, and make him fish out of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson whether he really has money. I might have made a cool five hundred by that Ridout business."

While he thus thought, and Burrel's meditations continued, though of a very different nature, a sudden ring of the bell roused them both from their reveries; and, after a short reconnoissance through the window, the miser exclaimed, "It is Sir Sidney Delaware, I declare!"

"Then you will be so good, Mr. Tims," said Burrel, in a tone sufficiently peremptory, "not to refer or allude to me, in any shape or way, as the person who wished to lend the money."

"Oh, certainly not!" replied the miser, with a shrewd glance; "it is a bad speculation that—but the Ridout business, if you will but think over it—will you see this Sir Sidney?"

"I have no objection," answered Burrel; and the miser bidding his dirty maid show the gentleman in, Sir Sidney Delaware was ushered into the parlour the moment after.

As soon as he saw that there was a stranger present, the baronet paused, and for an instant seemed as if he would have drawn back, saying, "You are engaged, Mr. Tims; I was not aware you had any one with you."

"Not at all, my dear sir!" said Mr. Tims. "Sir Sidney, Mr. Burrel—Mr. Burrel, Sir Sidney Delaware!"

"I am happy to have an opportunity, sir," said Burrel, "of returning you my personal thanks for the permission to shoot over your grounds, which you were kind enough to grant me."

"Where there is no obligation conferred, sir," replied the baronet, somewhat distantly, "there can be no occasion for thanks. I do not shoot—my son has not this year taken out a licence; and it is quite as well that the game should be shot by you, who ask permission, as by those who do not ask at all. He paused for an instant, while the colour deepened in Burrel's cheek; but the baronet's heart instantly reproached him for an uncourteous reply, and he added, "I hope you have found sport."

"Plenty of game," answered Burrel; "but the birds are very wild."

"That is a very natural consequence," said Sir Sidney Delaware, "of the immense number of persons whose notions of property are daily growing more limited."

"I trust, indeed, that something may soon be done," replied Burrel, "to correct the extensive system of poaching."

"Probably we shall soon have one of those beautiful pieces of legislation on the subject," replied Sir Sidney, "which will prevent people from committing the crime, by rendering it none in the eye of the law. But, Mr. Tims, as I have a little business of a private nature on which I must speak with you, I will probably call upon you to-morrow, if you are likely to be disengaged."

"No delay must take place on my account," said Burrel, rising. "My business with this gentleman is over; and therefore I will leave you."

Thus saying, he turned, and, wishing the baronet good morning, quitted the house, ushered to the door by Mr. Tims; who, though still doubtful as to the young stranger's wealth, followed him with many a lowly bow, fearful of losing by any indiscretion the sums that might accrue from the good management of the Ridout business. Burrel, in the meantime, took his way once more through the valley, musing, as he went, upon his late interview with Sir Sidney Delaware, with somewhat more deep and curious speculation than entered into the thoughts he bestowed upon the old miser, of whose general character he was before aware.

In the manner and tone of Sir Sidney Delaware, however, there was something that he felt to be repulsive and unpleasant, which, to a man of Burrel's character, was extremely painful. His first determination—if that can be called a determination which, formed upon impulse, does not last ten minutes—was to set out for London, and forget that such a place as Emberton, or such a person as Sir Sidney Delaware, was upon the face of the earth. Burrel, however, to use Sterne's expression, was a great motive-monger, but with this peculiarity, that he was fully as fond of examining his own motives as those of other people; and, in the present instance, the small still voice whispered something about offended pride, which made him inquire into his own heart a little more strictly.

CHAPTER IV.

On his return home, Burrel found that the horses which he expected from London had arrived in high condition, having performed the journey by slow and careful stages. The appearance of this new accession to his dignity was not, of course, without its effect upon the good people of Emberton, and "Have you seen Mr. Burrel's beautiful horses?" was a general question amongst the male part of the inhabitants; while all the ladies of the place, of course, were not in the least anxious to see the tall, dark, handsome, mysterious stranger ride forth upon some one of those three steeds whose fame already filled the town.

Those who had such expectations, however, were long disappointed, for during the whole of the following morning Mr. Burrel never set foot beyond his door; and it was near four o'clock when his servant, on horseback, proceeded towards Mrs. Darlington's with a small travelling portmanteau, thus giving notice that the master himself was soon to follow. About half-past four, or a quarter to five, a groom appeared at the door with a splendid dark bay horse, and a moment after Burrel himself came forth, and then putting his foot in the stirrup, swung himself easily into the saddle. The horse stood as still as marble till it felt its master's heel, and then, as if cut out of one piece, away went both—without the slightest regard to high-road—straight across the country towards Mrs. Darlington's house, which was seen crowning the distant hill.

"Happy Mrs. Darlington!" thought the ladies of Emberton as they gazed out, and saw the horseman clear the fence at a bound, and then canter lightly over the sloping fields that led away towards her dwelling. "Happy Mrs. Darlington!"—and Mrs. Darlington was a happy woman; but as there are at least a thousand ways, in this intellectual world, of being happy, we shall take leave to give a slight sketch of Mrs. Darlington's way.

Mrs. Darlington was a widow, and her happiness was further increased by being a widow with a large fortune. Nor was her fortune alone derived from her ci-devant husband, for she had passed through all the three stages of female felicity—that of co-heiress, heiress, and rich widow, with a very slight taste of the necessary purgatory preceding the last happy climax. Who was her father, matters not to this book; he was dead, and his ancestors had him in the dust,—

for, as the Spectator says, "He had ancestors just as well as you and I, if he could but have told their names." This, however, it was supposed, from some defect in the family memory, he could not do; but in regard to his daughter, who was neither very handsome nor very ugly, the defect was soon remedied. She had every sort of instruction that the known world could produce; her father luckily died early; she had no relations to make her vulgar; she married Mr. Darlington, a man of rank and station—easily acquired the slang and ease of fashionable life; and adopted boldly, and without remorse of conscience, the whole of her husband's relations. Her husband found that his wife brought him fortune, good luck, and no family. His affairs, to use the seaman's term, righted, and after four years' marriage he died, leaving her, out of pure gratitude, widowhood, fortune, and his relations.

Mrs. Darlington, having penetrated into the arcana, and got all she wanted—an introduction and a station in society—determined to taste no more of matrimony herself; though with laudable zeal she was ever willing to promote it amongst her friends and neighbours. She was naturally somewhat of a sentimental turn, but mingled and kept down by so sufficient a portion of small sensualities—I mean the eating, and drinking, and soft-lying, and, in short, the comfortable sensualities, nothing worse—that the sentimentality never became vulgar or troublesome. Nay, indeed, I might say, it never became apparent, and showed itself rather as a convenient sort of tender consideration for the wishes and feelings of young people of suitable ages and descriptions, and likely to fall in love with each other, than as anything personal. In most other things, she was one of those very ordinary persons, perfectly ladylike and at their ease, with a small degree of taste in the fine arts—drew tolerably, liked music, and would sometimes play on the piano—was fond of fine scenery—spoke French well, with the exception of a slight confusion in the genders—had an idea or two of Italian, and had sketched the Colosseum. Added to all these high qualities, she was extremely good-natured, very fond of her friends and of herself; quiet, in no degree obtrusive, with a sufficient share of vanity never to fancy herself neglected, and yet not enough to run against the vanity of any one. A little tiresome she was, it is true, from a potent mixture of insipidity; but who is there so splenetic as not to forgive the only evil quality over which one can fall sound asleep, and wake without a headache?

Mrs. Darlington's common course of life was to travel during six months of the year, accompanied by as many

young marriageable friends as she thought might do credit to her taste and kindness; and as she had a very extensive circle of acquaintances, at whose dwellings she was always welcome, these journeys were generally pleasant, and sometimes fortunate. Of the other six months, two were spent in London, where Mrs. Darlington, dressed by Carson, in the manner at once the most splendid and the most becoming her age, figured at dinner and evening parties, and was exceedingly useful both as a chaperon and a fill-up; while the other four months were passed at her estate near Emberton, with a house seldom entirely vacant, and dinner parties renowned for the delicacy of the 'manger.'

Such was the lady to whose house Henry Burrel, Esq., had received an invitation, solely upon the strength of the gossip of the village, and a vague report, that Captain Delaware had met him at the Earl of Ashborough's. The fact indeed was, that Mrs. Darlington's house was completely vacant at the time, or she might have felt some scruples as to asking a stranger, without some further information regarding his station in society than could be derived from the panegyric of the doctor, whose knowledge of him went no further than the cut of his coat. She did, indeed, feel a little apprehensive after she had dispatched the invitation, but the appearance of Burrel's servant, who brought her his reply, the form of the note that contained it, and the very handwriting, all convinced her that Henry Burrel must be a gentleman, though it was in vain that she racked her imagination to find out which of all the Burrels it could be.

When, about half-past four, Mr. Burrel's servant arrived, and proceeded to prepare the room assigned to his master, with a sort of ceremonious accuracy which argued the constant habit and custom of ease and care, the footman, feeling for the anxiety of his mistress—for footmen and ladies' maids know everything—communicated to Mrs. Hawkins, his mistress's maid, the result of his own observations; and Mrs. Darlington sat down, with a composed mind, to finish a sketch of the west shrubbery walk, till Mr. Burrel should arrive; while, of the rest of the guests she had invited, some had not appeared, and some had retired to dress.

At length, her eye caught, from the window, the apparition of some person on horseback approaching the house, and in a few minutes Mr. Burrel was announced. Graceful, easy, posé, Burrel's whole appearance carried its own recommendation with it. He was one of those men who, in speaking little, say much, and in a very few minutes he was in high favour with Mrs. Darlington.

It now became necessary for him to dress, as he well knew

that a lady whose fondness for the good things of this life was so admitted as Mrs. Darlington's would not brook the spoiling of her dinner; and accordingly he rang, and was shown to his room. His toilet, indeed, was not very long; and a few minutes after six, the hour named, found him entering the drawing-room.

There were four persons already assembled, of whom Mrs. Darlington herself was one. The face of the young lady who sat by her on the sofa was, he thought, familiar to him; but it cost him more than one glance, ere he recognised in the beautiful girl he now beheld, and who was certainly as lovely a thing as ever the female part of creation produced—it is saying a great deal, but it is true, nevertheless—it required more than one glance, I say, before he recognised in her the lady he had seen hanging upon the arm of Captain Delaware on the preceding day.

Burrel, however, never looked surprised; and his claim upon Miss Delaware's acquaintance was immediately admitted with a degree of frank and smiling kindness, which arose partly, perhaps, from the high character her brother had drawn of his stage-coach companion, but more still, in all probability, from feeling that her father's reserve might have given pain and offence. While he was still speaking with Mrs. Darlington and Miss Delaware, and was just at one of those before-dinner pauses in which the conversation flags, some one laid his hand upon Burrel's arm, and turning round, he confronted a thin, but hale elderly man, dressed in black, on whose fine gentlemanly countenance was playing a smile, which had as much archness in its composition as habitual gravity of expression would allow.

"My dear Henry," said the clergyman—for no one could look in his face for a moment and doubt that he was a clergyman—"my dear Henry, what have you been doing with yourself this many a day?"

The first look had shown Burrel an old and dear friend, and he shook his hand heartily as Dr. Wilton. "I am still, I believe, acting as one of what Tillotson calls 'fools at large,'" replied the young stranger, "and wandering about the world doing nothing."

"Ah, Henry!" replied the other, "your report of yourself was always less favourable than you deserved. You are not one to wander about the world doing nothing; but speak to me a moment," and he drew his younger companion gently towards the hollow of the bay window, where they conversed for a few moments in a low tone, while one or two of the neighbouring gentlemen and ladies were announced, and entered the room.

The dinner-bell rang immediately after; and the doors being thrown open, Burrel advanced and took in Mrs. Darlington, though he would, perhaps, have preferred a nearer place to Miss Delaware. But Dr. Wilton took the end of the widow's table, and laughingly secured the younger ladies to himself; so that Burrel was obliged to content himself with talking elaborate nonsense to Mrs. Darlington, which, to do him all manner of justice, he executed with great gravity and success.

"I do not like this Mr. Burrel," thought a sensible middle-aged county woman, who sat next to him on the other hand. "He's a coxcomb!" thought a rough, shrewd, wealthy proprietor opposite. The shy young fox-hunter, who sat a little further down, and whose ideas were strangely confined to horses, and dogs, and fences, and five-barred gates, was inclined to cry, with Mungo, "D—— his impudence!" and, in short, at the end of the table at which he himself sat, Burrel most perversely contrived to give very general dissatisfaction to every one but Mrs. Darlington. With her he ran over the slang of cookery, and criticism, and ton, with the most wonderful emptiness.

There is certainly some strange perversity in the human heart, which renders it so pleasant sometimes to make oneself disagreeable—ay, and, for the express purpose of doing so, to assume a character totally different from one's own. So, however, it is; and perhaps Burrel was especially giving himself forth as a fop at the one end of the table, because he very well knew that Dr. Wilton would not fail to portray him differently at the other.

Such, indeed, was the fact. Blanche Delaware was a sort of pet of the worthy clergyman; and he used to declare that he was always the proudest man in the county when in company with her, for that he was the only man she ever was known to flirt with. The affectionate term, "My dear," which he always applied to Miss Delaware, was felt by her as he intended it; and she looked up to him as, in some degree, a second parent. His conversation with her almost immediately turned to Burrel, whose appearance there had evidently surprised him.

"You seem an old friend of his?" said Miss Delaware, as soon as the soup was gone, and a general buzz suffered her to ask the question without particular notice. "Pray, is he so very admirable and charming as he has convinced my brother he is, in a short journey of a hundred miles?"

"He is something better than charming, my dear," replied Dr. Wilton. "He is one of the noblest-hearted, finest-minded men in England."

At that very moment there was one of those unhappy breaks which make low voices loud; and Burrel was heard descanting upon the merits of Madeira after soup. "For Heaven's sake, never think of taking Sherry, my dear madam!" he exclaimed. "After soup or maccaroni, Madeira is the only thing bearable."

Blanche Delaware looked up in Dr. Wilton's face with a smile full of playful meaning. "Do not judge him by that," replied the clergyman, speaking to the smile's purport—"do not judge him by that; I have known him from his boyhood. He was my pupil as a youth, and has been my friend as a man—and——"

"And that is evidence beyond rejection that he is all that is good and amiable?" said Miss Delaware, seriously.

"Ay, and though he can talk her own kind of nonsense to a worthy lady like that," replied Dr. Wilton, determined to revenge himself on Miss Delaware for her smile, "he can talk nonsense equally agreeable to younger and fairer ladies, my dear Blanche. So take care of your little heart, my pretty dame."

Miss Delaware laughed gaily, in the full ignorant confidence of a heart that had known no wound; and the conversation dropped as far as it regarded Burrel. He himself prolonged the idle gossip with which he was amusing himself for some time; but finding, or fancying, that the elder lady who sat next to him possessed a mind that could appreciate better things, he gradually led the conversation to matters of more general interest.

After dinner, Henry Burrel found himself seated, in the far part of the room, with a sofa-table, and innumerable books of drawings and prints upon it before him, and by the side of Blanche Delaware. It is wonderful what stepping-stones prints, and drawings, and annuals are to pleasant conversation, even though the first be not quite so well handled as the pictures of Prout or Stanley, and the latter contain nothing half so beautiful as Liddell's "Lines upon the Moors."

Burrel had managed his approaches well, though he did it unconsciously. He first stooped over the book of drawings that Miss Delaware was examining, to look at one of those fair Italian scenes where the long sunshine seems to stream forth from a spot beyond the picture, and pour onward, till one can absolutely see its wavy softness skip from point to point in its advance. He then spoke a few words, in a quiet, every-day tone, upon Italian scenery. Miss Delaware said, that she had never had an opportunity of visiting Italy, but had often heard her brother speak of it, with all his own wild

rapture. Burrel instantly took up the topic of her brother, well knowing that it was one, round which that tender-footed thing, a woman's heart, could play at ease; and while he spoke of Captain Delaware, he glided quietly into the vacant place by her side, and proceeded with a conversation which was destined to wander far and wide before it ended.

There was a kindly gentleness in Burrel's tone as he began, a sort of dreamy enthusiasm, slightly touched by a more gay and laughing spirit as he went on, together with a general leaven of the gentlemanly feeling that springs from a noble heart, softening and tempering the whole,—which united, addressed to Miss Delaware the most flattering compliment that woman can receive, by showing that he knew her to be worthy of very different conversation from that which he held with any one else. Such conversation is the adulation of respect, esteem, and admiration, expressed but not spoken.

Burrel's words were uttered with no particular emphasis—his eyes, fine and expressive as they were, gave no peculiar meaning to his sentences—the vainest beauty that ever grew old and ugly, could never have persuaded herself that he was making love to her—and yet Blanche Delaware could not but feel that there was a charm in the manners of Henry Burrel, which might turn the head of many a one with a heart less cold and indifferent than her own. A cold and indifferent heart in a girl of nineteen! Ye gods! Such, however, she fancied it to be—and, consequently, she talked with Henry Burrel of poetry, and painting, and beautiful scenes, and sweet music, and noble deeds, and generous feelings, and all those whirling spots of brightness that dance unconnected through the sunshine of enthusiastic minds, with all the ardour of innocence and youth, and unblighted feelings, and never dreamed of its becoming anything more. Mrs. Darlington, for her part, had soon perceived that Burrel and Miss Delaware were deep in what seemed interesting conversation. She did not pretend to divine what might happen—she prognosticated nothing—she took no notice, and let things take their course—but she carefully abstained from giving any interruption; and, by a few slight but skilful turns, prevented their little tête-à-tête from being broken in upon so soon as it otherwise would have been.

It was Dr. Wilton, who, in the simplicity of his heart, dissolved it for the night; for after having been talking earnestly for a few minutes with the little surgeon of Emberton, about some of his poor parishioners who were sick, his eye met that of Blanche Delaware, as she still sat beside Burrel on the sofa, and it lighted up for a moment with a

glance of gay meaning, that called the blood into her fair cheek. Burrel marked it all; and the next two answers which Miss Delaware made to what he was saying were sufficiently 'à travers' to show him that the conversation, on her part at least, rolled no longer at its ease. To prolong it under such circumstances would be a crime, as he well knew; and therefore he soon furnished her with an excuse to join Mrs. Darlington.

The evening then proceeded as such evenings usually do, partly in music and partly in idle gossip. Some stupid people played at whist; and at ten o'clock the carriages of those who returned home were announced. Dr. Wilton, who lived at twelve miles distance, and Blanche Delaware, who lived at five, remained with Mrs. Darlington and Henry Burrel; and the worthy clergyman, who felt himself in some degree bound to prove his former pupil as charming as he had depicted him, took care to lead the conversation to those subjects on which he well knew Burrel would shine.

He did shine, too, but without striving to do it; and the evening wore on, for another hour, as pleasantly as moments could fly. There is something in the last hour of the day, if it have been itself a happy one, which seems to concentrate all the pleasant things of the past. It is like a fine evening sky, calm, and sweet, and full of rays, that are all the rosier because they are the last.

I do not know whether it would be fair or proper to follow Blanche Delaware to her bed-room, and investigate what were her thoughts while she was undressing and falling asleep; but as no such considerations forbid with regard to Burrel, we may, for a moment, intrude upon his privacy, first premising, that the door of his room opened very nearly at the top of the great staircase, the landing-place of which formed a sort of balustraded gallery, with a corridor running to the right and left. His first thought, as he sat down for his silent servant to pull off his shoes and stockings, it must be allowed, was of Blanche Delaware, and he internally pronounced her a very charming girl. "It is not her beauty," he thought, "though she is very beautiful; but it is that freshness of mind, that fine unsophisticated heart, whose rapid emotions, sparkling up unchecked to that sweet face, and animating every movement of that fair form, give a thousand graces and lovelinesses that art could never reach. One might very well fall in love with such a girl as that. I must take care what I am about."

With this resolution to take care, Burrel would have dismissed the subject; but still he thought of Blanche Delaware

a good deal more than was necessary; and, after having detained his servant full half an hour longer than usual, went to bed thinking of her still.

CHAPTER V.

Although there was a good deal of noise in the house for some time, Burrel fell sound asleep in the midst of it. Whether he dreamed or not, I cannot tell; but after he had been in the arms of slumber for a long while, as it appeared to him, he awoke, and heard still some sounds of moving to and fro, although less loud than before. Moralising upon that strange thing sleep, and its power of taking from us all consciousness of time's passing, he turned himself round to court the drowsy god again; but though the slight noises that had roused him ceased in a moment altogether, the charm was dissolved, and he could not close an eye. His only resource was to think of Miss Delaware; and although he was obliged to own that the blessing of Heaven—in keeping her out of London and London life—had brought forth all those natural graces and charms which he so much admired, yet he could not but think it hard that such a flower should be born to blush unseen; neither could he help fancying that it would be no very unpleasant thing to transplant her to a more happy soil. Feeling all this, and feeling that he was feeling it, Burrel saw better than ever that it was necessary to take care what he was about; and, as the first step, he applied himself vigorously to go to sleep again. The night was oppressively warm, however, and it would not do. He began also to fancy that there was a marvellous smell of wood smoke; and he thought that, if Mrs. Darlington's housekeeper had begun already to provide for the 'manger' of the next day, Mrs. Darlington's cook must have a hard place of it. So, stretching out his hand, he reached his watch, struck it, and found that it was just half-past two.

He now began to think the smell of smoke odd as well as disagreeable; and, raising himself on his arm, he found that it was more potent than he had at first perceived. There was also a sort of faint rushing sound, as of a draught of wind through long passages, and Burrel thought he heard a cracking noise also, which, after listening for a moment or two, determined him to rise and make a voyage of discovery. To guard against all contingencies, he partly dressed himself, put on his dressing-gown, and then opened the door. A loud

roaring sound, and a still greater volume of smoke, immediately met him; but he found that there was yet another door between him and the corridor; and, as he was seeking for the lock, it was thrown open, by his own servant, so violently as almost to knock him down.

It wanted not the man's cry of "Sir, sir, the house is on fire!" to show Burrel what had happened. A red fearful glare, of bright flame shining through dense volumes of smoke, was seen below, from the edge of the sort of gallery on which he stood, while along the cornices and mouldings a number of detached spots of fire appeared running on before the great body of the conflagration like light troops thrown forward to skirmish. The roaring and crackling, too, which, as well as the suffocating smoke, had been, in a great measure, excluded from his bed-room by the double door, was now sufficiently distinct; and at one glance he perceived that the whole foot of the great oak staircase, near the top of which his apartment opened, was in flames. At the same time, as he looked along the corridor to the left, he saw another door open, which seemed to lead to the top of a different flight of steps; for he could distinctly see two or three figures, in every state of dishabille, running down as fast as possible, while his servant pulled him that way, begging him to come to the stone stairs.

All this was gathered in a moment, and Burrel demanded, "Have you seen any of the family?—Mrs. Darlington——"

"I saw her this moment, sir, running down with Dr. Wilton," replied the man.

"And Miss Delaware?" demanded his master.

"I don't know, sir—I don't know!" replied the man, hastening away himself. "The house will be down, sir, if you don't make haste."

A good sturdy housemaid, however, hurrying away from some of the upstair rooms, caught Miss Delaware's name, and cried out—without stopping in her flight however—"Oh, dear! oh, dear! poor young lady—she will be burned to a certainty!"

"Which is her room?" demanded Burrel. But it was not till he had repeated his question in a still louder tone that the woman paused to point with her hand, exclaiming, "Up there at the end of the wing!—she will be burned!—Oh, dear, she will be burned!"—and off ran the housemaid.

Burrel ran along the corridor like light. It was evident that—as is always the case in houses on fire—all the inhabitants had lost their wits for the time, and no one had even thought of Miss Delaware. Without ceremony, Burrel threw open the last door that he came to, in the direction

which the servant had pointed out, but the glare of the flames was quite sufficient to show him that it had not been slept in that night. He tried the next, and instantly perceived all the little articles of a lady's toilet spread upon the table, while by the drawn curtains of the bed, he doubted not that the sleep of its fair tenant had been undisturbed by the sounds which had woke himself.

The violence with which he threw open the door woke Blanche Delaware from the first sweet sleep of innocence and youth; and her voice demanding, in alarm, "Who is there?" immediately struck his ear.

He knew that not a moment was to be lost; and though he approached her bedside with a feeling of real pain, from the shock he was about to give her, there was but one course to be pursued; and, springing forward, he drew back the curtains. "Forgive me!" he cried, "but the house is on fire—not a moment is to be lost!—Your life is at stake, and you must pardon me if I use but scanty ceremony!"

"Leave me! leave me, then, Mr. Burrel, and let me rise!" she exclaimed, gazing in his face with all the wild surprise natural to one wakened from their sleep by such tidings.

"Miss Delaware, moments are life!" replied Burrel, hastily. "Even while I speak our only chance may be cut off."

The gathering smoke and the rushing sound of the flames bore to his own ear, as well as to that of the fair girl who lay pale and trembling before him, the certainty that he spoke no more than truth; and, without further pause, he stooped over her, wrapped the bedclothes round her as tenderly and delicately as a mother would wrap her young infant from the wintry wind, and, catching her up in his arms, he bore her out into the corridor. All before them was a scene of mingled smoke and flame. The wainscoting of the corridor, the balustrades, the cornices, were all charred, blackened, and catching fire in a thousand places. The blaze was rushing up from below, towards the skylight, which had unfortunately been left open, and gave an additional draught. Wherever an open door presented itself, the flames were seen rushing in, licking the door-posts and the wainscoting; the heat was scorching; the smoke was suffocating; and every step that Burrel took forward, he felt uncertain whether the beams over which he trod would not give way beneath his feet. Still, however, he strode on till he reached the spot where the flames were rushing up the great staircase more furiously than anywhere else, from the additional mass of fuel that there supplied the fire. His foot was on the edge of the landing, to

cross over towards the stone stairs; and he had just time—warned by a sudden crash—to draw back, when the whole staircase and part of the corridor above it gave way, and fell into the vestibule below. It was a fearful sight; but he was not a man to leave any chance of safety to be snatched from him by terror. The rest of the corridor beyond the gap appeared more sound than that he had already past. He remembered having seen a side-door in his own room, which he had just left behind; and retreading his steps, he entered the chamber, drove in the door he had remarked—which was but weakly fastened—with a single kick, and running through a room, the tenant of which had made his escape, he passed on into a dressing-room, and thence regained the corridor, beyond the point where it had been connected with the great staircase.

The fall of so much lime rubbish had in a degree deadened the fire; and, striding on, Burrel reached the door which opened on the stone staircase. The rush of cool air and the joy of escape revived him, almost suffocated as he was with the heat and smoke; and, bending down his head over his fair burden, he said—the most natural thing in the world—"Dear girl, you are safe!"—Ay, though he had only seen her twice in all his life!

Though they were now in comparative security, the fire had made sufficient progress even there to render haste imperative, and Burrel lost not a moment till he reached a small door which led out upon the lawn by some ascending steps. At about the distance of fifty or sixty yards were assembled the whole of the late inmates of the dwelling—mistress, visitors, and servants, with twenty or thirty country men and women—all engaged in the laudable occupation of seeing the house burn.

Dr. Wilton was the only one in a state of activity; and he, in his shirt and breeches, which, with the exception of his shovel hat, were the only articles of apparel he had saved, was endeavouring to instigate some of the servants and peasantry to get up a ladder to the window of Miss Delaware's room, which—what between fear, wonder, and stupidity—they were performing with extraordinary slowness. At the same time, one of the Molly Dusters was corroborating to the rest of the company the assertion of Burrel's servant, who informed them that his master had gone to fetch Miss Delaware; and the very likely consummation that they would both be burned together was prophesied manfully, just as he was making his way across the green towards them, to prove that he did not intend to participate in such a holocaust.

On seeing Burrel, and guessing what it was that he carried

in his arms, Mrs. Darlington, who was really a good-tempered woman, gave way a great deal more to her feelings than her usual 'bienseance' permitted, and literally screamed for joy. Since her escape she had found time to get cool in body if not in mind; and indeed the latter part of the mixed whole was by this time sufficiently tranquillised to admit the vision of a pretty little quiet romance to cross her mind concerning Burrel and Blanche Delaware, and to suggest the propriety of letting her house burn away in peace, while she took shelter, and guarded against taking cold, in the cottages just below the lodge. Thither, too, she requested Burrel, who would give up his fair burden to no one, to follow her; and she herself led the way, with a thousand encomiums on his heroic gallantry, mingled with thanks to Heaven that all her title-deeds were at the banker's, and manifold aspirations concerning the fire-resisting powers of the plate-chests.

Burrel thought of nothing but her he carried in his arms. It was not love he felt, but it was intense interest; and I will defy any man to carry a beautiful girl that he has already admired and liked, through dangers such as those, pressed close to his own bosom, and with her heart beating against his, without feeling very different towards her from what he ever did before. He had, however, a quality which few young men possess much of—considerable delicacy of mind; and, as soon as he had placed Miss Delaware in safety in the cottage, he left her with Mrs. Darlington.

He then hastened back as fast as possible towards the house, with a determination of doing all that he rationally could to save whatever portion of it remained, but without the slightest intention in the world of bringing his life into jeopardy, or enacting wonders worthy of a demi-god either to preserve the property of a rich old widow lady, about whom he did not care a sixpence, or to astonish worthy Dr. Wilton and half-a-dozen lackeys and cowherds who were looking on. When he arrived at the spot, however, he found that the occupation which he had proposed to himself had been already seized by a stout agile young fellow, in a sailor's jacket and trousers, who had arrived on the ground during his absence, and had inspired one or two of the peasantry with some activity.

The efforts of this young man were energetic, bold, and cleverly executed; but, from being ill-directed, did little comparative good, while his own life was every moment hazarded. Indeed, personal security seemed the last thing that he considered; and perhaps this somewhat superabundant display of daring might do some good, if only by stirring up the more slothful to a tolerable degree of activity. Burrel paused

and looked on for an instant, but not from either over prudence or laziness. What is best to be done may be always better considered before doing anything than after, provided too much time is not bestowed upon it; and, in the single moment that Burrel gave to consideration, he perceived that the young sailor was not only doing no good, but running himself and others into certain destruction, by continuing to labour at the centre of the house—the interior of which was completely consumed, and the roof of which threatened to fall—while, by cutting off the communication between the corps de logis and the wings, a considerable part of the building might be saved. The moment his mind was made up, he entered the principal door, and catching the young sailor by the arm, as he stood in what had been the vestibule, he called upon him to desist.

The lad, for he was scarcely a man, turned round upon him for a moment with a countenance, which haste, heat, and impetuosity of disposition, rendered somewhat furious at the interruption; but a few calm, reasonable words from Burrel, at once showed him the rationality of what he proposed, and after a single oath, escaping, as it were, by the safety valve of his tongue, he agreed to follow. Burrel then hastened to get out of the stifling heat and smoke; but finding that the other still lingered, he turned again at the door. The sailor had paused to recover a bucket, and was at the very instant taking his first step after Burrel, when a small quantity of heated rubbish came pattering from above, and then, with a considerable crash, a thick beam detached itself from the roof, caught upon the ruins of the staircase, and swung blazing for a single instant above the vestibule. The young man sprang forward towards the door; but he was too late to escape entirely. The beam came thundering down—it struck him, and he fell.

Something more was now at stake than the bed and table linen of an old woman. A life is always worth the peril of a life, and Burrel at once plunged in again, and dragged him out, though certainly at the risk of much more than he would have hazarded to save Mrs. Darlington's abode, or any inanimate thing it ever contained. He was scarcely clear of the doorway when the roof fell in, and the rush and the roar, and the subsequent silence, and the suddenly smothered flame, showed him what he had escaped, and made him pause for an instant with a thankful exclamation to that Being, before whose eyes a sparrow falls not to the ground unheeded.

Henry Burrel then drew the man he had rescued forward, beyond the influence of the heat. I say drew, because he evinced a strange inaptitude to voluntary locomotion, from which Burrel did not augur very favourably; and being

within an inch of six feet high, with a very tolerable proportion of sinew and muscle, he was not quite so portable in one's arms as Blanche Delaware.

"Now, my good friends," said Burrel, laying the lad down upon the smooth turf of the lawn, and addressing those who crowded round, "if you want really to render any assistance, get what axes, picks, crows, and other things of the kind you can, and break down entirely yon little gallery which lies between the house and the right wing. You run no risk; for the fire has not yet caught the gallery, and you will save the wing. Never mind this young man, I will attend to him. Here, Harding," he added, speaking to his servant, "you are a cowardly ——. Take care of yourself, the next time I meet you in a house on fire, that I do not throw you into the flames, to prevent your running away when I want your assistance."

The man replied nothing as usual, and his master proceeded, "Have you a penknife in your pocket?"

"No, sir," answered the servant; but Dr. Wilton supplied the deficiency.

"Here is one!" he cried, groping in his breeches pocket; "what are you going to do, my dear Harry? The poor lad seems dead."

"Only stunned, I hope," replied Burrel; "but, at all events, the best thing one can do for him is to cut the artery in the temple, and let him bleed freely. If he be dead, it can do him no harm; if there be any life left, it will recall it."

Thus speaking, with little ceremony he drew the penknife sharply across the artery, much to the wonder of the bystanders, some of whom thought him a fine, bold gentleman; some concluded that he was but little troubled with that civil understrapping virtue of discretion. The effect, however, soon became visible. The blood at first hardly flowed, but, in a moment after, it burst forth with rapid jerks. A deep sigh followed from the hurt man, and in an instant after he looked faintly round.

"I thought I was gone!" he cried, raising himself on his hand, and looking towards the fire. "My head's bad enough still; but I rather think I owe you my life, sir. Well, there is an old woman down in the village will pray God bless you."

Burrel now endeavoured to staunch the blood; but like many other persons, he had not previously calculated all the consequences of what he was going to do; and he might have found the undertaking somewhat difficult, had it not fortunately happened that the flames of Mrs. Darlington's villa

had alarmed the whole of the little town and neighbourhood of Emberton, and thus people were flocking up both on foot and on horseback. Amongst the first that arrived was, of course, her late guest, the village surgeon—one at least of the learned professions being more peculiarly and unhappily obnoxious to Rochefoucault's sneering assertion, that there is always something pleasant to ourselves in the misfortunes of our friends. The surgeon, then, was amongst the first, of course, sparing not his horse's breath, in order to condole and sympathise, and look grave, and set a limb or tend a bruise, or dress a burn, or, in short, perform any of those small acts which are the sources of emolument, present or future, to a country apothecary. His arrival happened at a fortunate moment for Burrel's patient; and, after having ascertained that no one of more consequence was hurt, he complimented the young stranger highly on his prompt and skilful treatment of poor Wat Harrison, as he called him, suffered the bleeding to continue for another moment, merely to show how much he approved of what had been done, and then proceeded to stop it.

The adventures of the night were now soon concluded. By Burrel's directions, and the exertions of the peasantry, stimulated at last to some degree of activity, one wing of the house, as well as the stabling and offices, was saved; and, from the part thus preserved, apparel was procured sufficient to clothe the half-naked bodies of those who were its late denizens. This apparel, indeed, was of somewhat an anomalous description, and the metamorphoses produced were rather strange; for though Miss Delaware came out most beautifully as a pretty dairymaid, and Mrs. Darlington did not look ill as a housekeeper, yet Dr. Wilton had a somewhat fantastic air when a footman's great-coat was added to his black breeches, silk stockings, and shovel hat. Burrel himself adhered to his own dressing-gown, though many a hole was burnt in the gay flowers that covered it, and many a stain and scorch obscured the original colours. A general smile, which even the serious calamity that had reduced them to that state could not repress, played upon the lips of the whole party, as they met in such strange attire at the door of the cottages, just as the pale light of the morning was pouring faint and bluish through the air. On the countenance of Blanche Delaware, however, that smile mingled with a flickering blush as she answered Burrel's inquiries concerning her health; and Burrel, though he could not but think it as beautiful a thing as ever the eyes of the morning rested on, hastened, by quiet and easy words of deep but unceremonious respect, to remove the glow with the embarrassment that caused it.

By this time, all sorts of chaises and vehicles had arrived from Emberton, and Mrs. Darlington's own carriage and horses had been brought up from the stables. Burrel handed the two ladies in to proceed to the village, the inn of which place, Mrs. Darlington declared, should be her abode for the next day or two. He declined, however, a seat beside them; and bidding his servant take care of his horses, and bring them down afterwards, he himself—the fire having nearly expended itself—got into a hack-chaise for Emberton, and, accompanied by the young sailor who had been hurt, drove slowly down into the valley.

Dr. Wilton, whose living lay at a considerable distance in a different direction, had before taken leave of him, with many a pressing invitation to the rectory, and had preceded him in departing. One by one, the people of the town returned, and the peasantry dropped away; and, with one man left to keep watch, the ruins of Mrs. Darlington's house remained smouldering in silent solitude, like the history of a battle, which, full of fire, confusion, and destruction, while it lasts, leaves, after the lapse of a few years, nothing but vacancy, ruin, and the faint smoke of fame.

CHAPTER VI.

The chaise rolled on, and, passing through the town, turned up the lane leading by the park wall towards the mansion-house, and, after proceeding about a couple of hundred yards, stopped at the door of a neat cottage, humble and small, but clean and decked with flowers.

"Stay, and let me help you out!" said Burrel to his companion, as the postilion opened the door.

"No, no!" cried the lad, rousing himself from the sort of dozing state in which he had hitherto continued. "It will frighten her. Let me get out myself. She has had frights enough already."

He was next the door, and he staggered down the steps with an effort; but, before his foot touched the ground, a female figure appeared at the entrance of the cottage. It was that of a woman of about forty years of age, with traces of considerable beauty, less withered apparently by time than by sorrow; for the braided hair upon her forehead was but thinly mingled with grey, the teeth were fine and white, the eye clear and undimmed. But there was many a line about the mouth which seemed to hold every smile in chains, and there was an expression of deep, habitual anxiety in the

eyes, fine as they were, that can only be fixed in them by care. They seemed always asking, "What new sorrow now?" She was dressed in the garb of a widow—not deep weeds, but those habiliments which might still be worn as marks of the eternal mourning of the heart, after time and the world's changes had banished the memory of her loss from every bosom but her own. They were neat and clean, but plain, and even coarse; and her appearance—and it did not belie her state—was altogether that of a person in the humbler class of life; but with a mind, and perhaps an education, in some degree superior to those of her own station.

As the young man got out of the chaise, she took two or three quick steps forward to meet him, exclaiming, with an anxious gaze at his face, "Oh, my boy! what has happened now?"

"Nothing, mother, nothing!" answered the young man; "a knock on the head! That's all! Nothing at all! It will be well to-morrow;" and he strove to pass into the house, as if to hide himself from the anxious eyes which were scanning his pale face, dabbled as it was with blood.

Burrel sprang out of the chaise, and putting his right hand under the lad's elbow, so as to support him steadily, he gently displaced his mother's hand by taking it in his own, and leading her on with them into the cottage, saying, as he did so, "Your son, my good lady, has had a severe blow on the head, from the falling of a beam, as he was aiding gallantly to extinguish the fire at Mrs. Darlington's. We have been obliged to bleed him; but, as you see, he is much better now; and I doubt not, with care and good medical advice, will soon be quite well."

By this time he had got the young man into the cottage, and seated him on a wooden chair near the door; but the words of comfort that he spoke seemed to fall meaningless on the ears of the widow, who stood and gazed upon her son's face with an expression of anxious care which we must have all seen at some time or another, but which is hardly describable. It was not only the sorrow and the anxiety of the moment, but it was the crushed heart, prophesying many a future woe from long experience of grief,—it was the waters of bitterness, welling from the past, and mingling its gall with all things present or to come.

Her son was her first thought, but she marked Burrel's words, though she answered them not; for the next moment she said, as if speaking to herself,—for distress had done away with courtesy for the moment—"Where am I to get good medical advice?"

"That shall not be wanting, my good lady," replied Burrel, kindly. "Come, come, the matter is not so bad as you think it. Get your son to bed, and as soon as Mr. Tomkins, the surgeon, returns, he shall have my orders to give him every attention. He will soon be better; so set your mind at ease."

"Oh, sir!" answered the widow, looking, for the first time, at the person who spoke to her, "I have not known what a mind at ease is, for many a long year. But you are very good, sir, and I ought to have thanked you before."

"That you ought, mother," said the young man; "for he got me out of the fire, and saved my life. God bless you, sir! I can be thankful enough for a good turn, in spite of all that the people of this place may say against me. They first drove me to do a bad thing, and then gave me a worse name for it than I ever deserved."

"I believe it is too often so," answered Burrel, laying his hand with a gentle motion upon his arm; "and many a man like you, my poor fellow, may be driven from small faults to great ones. But it is never too late to correct one's mistakes; and as I will bear witness to your gallant exertions to save Mrs. Darlington's property, you will now have a good foundation to raise a better name for yourself, than you seem to say you have hitherto obtained. Let this make a new beginning for you, and I will take care you shall not want encouragement."

The young sailor suddenly grasped his hand, and wrung it tight in his own. "God bless you, sir!" he said, "God bless you!" and Burrel fully understood that the words of hope he had spoken found their way straight to a heart that might have gone astray, but was not entirely corrupted. After a few more kind words to the widow and her son, he got into the chaise again, and returned to his lodging. His first care was to provide medical aid for the young sailor, and he sent immediately for Mr. Tomkins, the surgeon, who had by this time returned. After giving full orders and authority to see the young man, God willing, completely restored to health, with all the necessary attendance and medicaments to be charged to his account, Burrel learned from the apothecary the history of the young sailor, which is as simple a one as ever was told.

His father and mother had married young, principally upon the strength of that cameleon fricassee—hopes and expectations; and his father had settled in a small shop in Emberton, became a bankrupt, and died. There is nothing wonderful in that; for oxalic—nay, prussic acid itself, has no advantage over broken hopes, except in being a quicker poison. If one

takes up the Gazette, and looks at the names of the great bankers and merchants that have figured in its sad list during the last twenty years, we shall find that two out of three have not survived their failure three years. Well, he died: and his widow did hope that the liberal creditors would allow her the means of carrying on her husband's trade again, or at least supporting herself and her child. But no. The world is a very good world, and a liberal and generous world, but let no one, as they value peace, count upon its kindness or generosity for a moment. The liberal creditors left her not a shred on the face of the earth that they could take, and turned her and her beggar boy into the street. To the kindness of Sir Sidney Delaware she owed the small cottage in which she dwelt; but Sir Sidney, God help him! had hardly enough for himself; and though many a little act of comforting kindness was shown by the poor family of the park to the poor family in the cottage, yet that was not enough for support, and want was often at the door. As the boy grew up, his heart burned at his mother's need; and in an evil hour he became connected with a gang of poachers—plundered the preserves of Sir Timothy Ridout—was detected—resisted. The gamekeeper was struck and injured in the affray, and poor Wat Harrison, as he was called, was nearly finding his way to Botany Bay; when, by some kind management, he was allowed to go to sea, and remained in Captain Delaware's ship till she was paid off, a few months before the time of which I now write.

It has before been shown that Wat Harrison had established for himself a bad character in the little town which saw his birth. To such a degree even had he done this, that the peculiar class of wiseacres, who have a prepossession in favour of hanging, uniformly agreed that he would be hanged. Such a reputation once established, is not easily shaken off; and although, at his return, he bore a high character from Captain Delaware, who reported him—what he really was—a brave, active, gallant lad, somewhat rash and headstrong, and with a disposition that, in good guidance, might be led to everything good and noble—still the wiseacres shook the knowing head, and declared that all that might be very true, but that bad company would soon make him as bad as ever.

Burrel listened to the story with some attention; but by this time he had resumed his impenetrability, which had been a little shaken within the last four-and-twenty hours; and the good doctor could by no means discover what Henry Burrel intended to do in favour of poor Wat Harrison, or whether he intended to do anything.

It is not improbable that, as the surgeon was really a kind-

hearted man, he would have given what medical aid was required by the widow's son, even had no pecuniary remuneration brightened with its golden rays the horizon of a long attendance; but the unlimited order he received to do everything that was necessary for the youth's complete recovery, inspired a new alacrity into all his movements; for there is no charity which is half so active as that which is paid for.

Away, then, hied worthy Mr. Tomkins, undivided surgeon to the whole little township of Emberton and its dependencies, to attend Harrison, with as much eager zeal as if the lad had been a Calender, a king's son, instead of a poor widow's; and his prompt appearance, as well as several mysterious "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," which he joined to some mysterious words about her son having secured a powerful protector, served greatly to soothe the heart of poor Widow Harrison. In good truth, much did it need soothing; for her only child had soon fallen into the same fearful drowsy state again, from which his first arrival at her humble dwelling had roused him, and either left her questions unanswered, or answered at random. This had terrified and alarmed her to a dreadful degree; and the assurances of the surgeon, that her son would do well, joined to the hints he gave, that her future prospects were brightening, brought the first rays of the blessed day-star of joy to shine in upon her heart which had found their way through the casement of her cottage for many a year.

The lad was by this time in bed, and a second bleeding relieved him; but it was now discovered that the beam had struck his side as well as his head, and there appeared some reason to fear inflammation, from the feverish state of his pulse. Cooling drinks and refrigerants of all kinds were recommended; and as Mr. Burrel's orders had been dictated in a spirit of liberality, to which the mind of the village surgeon was averse to set bounds, yet afraid to give full course, he deemed it best to wait upon that gentleman, and state what he thought necessary.

"In regard to medicines, and everything of that kind, my dear sir," replied Burrel, who was found with half a dozen half-written letters before him, "in regard to medicines, and everything of that kind, I must let him trust to you. As to diet, the 'juvantia' and 'lædentia' must be explained to my man, who shall have full orders to provide all that is necessary for him."

The letters on the table were a sufficient hint to a man, a part of whose profession it is to understand hints quickly; and after the words of course, he took leave once more and departed.

A short time after, Burrel's silent servant, Harding, appeared at the cottage, bringing with him all that could make a sick man comfortable. He himself was active and attentive; and, considering his wonted reserve, Master Harding might be looked upon as loquacious. He showed none of those airs which the servants of fine gentlemen sometime affect when called upon to attend the poor or sick, in any of those cases in which their masters find it convenient to do the less pleasant parts of charity by deputy; but, sitting down by the bed of the sick man, he asked kindly after his health —talked over the accident which had occasioned the injury from which he suffered—turned up his nose at his own master, when Widow Harrison called down blessings on Burrel's head—declared that the time was fast coming when such men would find their right level—and hoped in his days to see the national debt wiped away with a wet sponge, and a reasonable limit fixed to the fortunes of private men, so that no such unequal distribution of things that were naturally in common should take place.

CHAPTER VII.

About three o' the clock of the day at which we are still pausing, a heavy shower came on, and if there were a spark left till then unextinguished amongst the blackened remains of Mrs. Darlington's house, there certainly now came down from above the wherewithal to drown it out effectually. The whole heavens became black and gloomy, and for about an hour there was nothing to be seen but a scanty allowance of prospect, half obscured by the grey drizzle. Shortly after, however, a yellow break made its appearance on the south-western edge of the horizon, and the rays of a September sun, mingling with the falling shower, poured through the streaks of rain, and seemed to fringe the cloud with an edging of spun glass. Moving slowly onward, the heavy mass of vapours left room for the evening sun to burst forth, and, while the rainbow waved its scarf of joy in the air, the whole world sparkled up refreshed and brightened by the past rain.

It was just about the same moment that Henry Burrel, rising up from a desk at which he had been writing, closed it, rang the bell, and, giving two letters to his servant for the post, ordered him to bring his hat and stick, and went out.

In the meanwhile Burrel pursued his way, and entering the open door of the cottage, knocked at that of the room in

which he had before seen the widow. Another door opposite, however, was immediately opened by Widow Harrison, and Burrel, entering the room with that pleasant and unpretending easiness of demeanour which is always received as a kindly compliment by the lower classes, found himself, to his surprise, in the presence of Miss Delaware.

Although her mind was too little acquainted with evil in any shape to lead Blanche Delaware to fancy for a single instant that any one would put a wrong construction on her actions, yet there was something, she knew not well what, in all that had passed between Burrel and herself since their first meeting, that called up into her cheek a slight blush, unconnected with any unpleasant feelings, as soon as she beheld him. Those blushes are great tell-tales, and will often let out the secret of a woman's heart before she herself knows that there is any secret in it; but we shall have more to say of them hereafter.

The blush instantly passed away, however; and, as Burrel advanced to speak to her, it was all gone.

"I am delighted to see you, Miss Delaware," he said; "for I really had hardly time to convince myself this morning that you had neither suffered from cold nor from alarm in all the terrible adventures of last night."

"Not in the least," answered Miss Delaware; "and I have to thank you, Mr. Burrel, for life. For, certainly, had it not been for your prompt and generous assistance, I must have perished by a miserable death. As it was," she added with a smile, which was followed by a blush again, "as it was, your assistance was so prompt, and I was so sound asleep, that I had not time to be frightened till I was safe. However, I must trust the expression of my gratitude to those who are more capable of doing justice to it. My brother, I believe, is now gone to call upon you."

Widow Harrison had stood by, listening respectfully, but there was many a shade of care removed from her face since the morning; and as soon as Miss Delaware had ended, and there was a pause—for Burrel, feeling that he would a thousand times sooner be thanked by her own lips than by those of her brother, halted at this reply—the poor woman joined in to express her gratitude too. A degree of embarrassment, however, as to the manner, made her do it somewhat obliquely, and she exclaimed, addressing Blanche Delaware—"Oh, ma'am! this gentleman is good and kind to every one! This is the gentleman I was telling you brought home my poor boy, and sent Dr. Tomkins, and his own servant, too; and has been so kind!"

Blanche Delaware looked up in Burrel's face with one of

those sparkling smiles—as brilliant and more precious than a diamond—the beaming approbation of a good heart at the sight of a good action.

And Blanche Delaware's smile was the sweetest that it is possible to conceive, and none the less so because it beamed upon as fair a countenance as the eye of man ever rested upon. Altogether, it was like the sunshine upon a beautiful country—lovely in itself, and lovely by that over which it played. "I thought it was the same, Margaret," she replied to the widow; "I thought it was the same, because—because—there was no other stranger at the fire—that I heard of at least."

Burrel might well ask his heart what it was about!—though it was a day too late; for by this time it was determined to have its own way. However, he knew more of the world than Blanche Delaware, and the knowledge of good and evil has always the same effect that it had at man's first fall. "And they knew that they were naked," says the Book of Genesis; and in that simple record, the main motive and hidden cause of all that class of weaknesses and follies is to be found which teach man to conceal his actions, his thoughts, and his feelings—to shrink from public censure, or fear the opinion of the world. The knowledge of the good and evil that is in the world teaches even the noblest mind to know the proneness of all nature to wickedness, and makes it hasten to clothe itself in a seeming not its own. Burrel knew the world and its evil, and felt that, however pleasant it might be to stay where he was, and enjoy the conversation of Blanche Delaware for an hour, for her sake it would be better for him to refrain; and therefore, after visiting the young sailor, who was in bed in the next room, and bidding his mother ask frankly for everything that was necessary for his comfort or recovery, he took leave of Miss Delaware, telling her that he would bend his steps homewards, in the hope of meeting her brother.

Ere he had crossed the bridge, his hand was clasped in that of Captain Delaware, who was, in fact, infinitely glad of an opportunity of drawing closer the acquaintance which he formed with his stage-coach companion. He thanked him animatedly and warmly for his gallant conduct in saving his sister, and apologised for the fact of his father not calling on him that night, on account of slight indisposition, adding, however, that it was his purpose to do so on the following morning.

To the latter annunciation Burrel merely bowed; but to the first he replied with a smile, that he believed he owed Miss Delaware an apology more than she owed him thanks,

for having so impudently walked into her room in the middle of the night; although, he believed, they would have been both burned if he had paused much longer to consider of proprieties or improprieties.

Captain Delaware laughed. "Blanche," said he, "though even I, her brother, cannot help owning that she is a very 'witching little person, in her way, when she likes it, has no great desire to pass through such a fiery ordeal as that from which you relieved her; but if you will come with me to Widow Harrison's cottage she will thank you herself."

"I have already had the pleasure of seeing her, and have been thanked far more than necessary," replied Burrel; "for I certainly did no more than I would have done to serve any lady in similar circumstances; though I cannot deny that the merit of the action was greatly decreased by the object of it being Miss Delaware."

Captain Delaware paused for a moment, and then, catching his companion's meaning, replied, smiling at his momentary dulness, "Oh, I understand you!—oh, I understand you! But, indeed, my dear sir, you must give me notice the next time you intend to leave the complimentary part of your speech implied rather than understood; for, at first, I understood your meaning to be, that you would rather have served any other person than my sister."

"Quite the contrary," replied Burrel. "The pleasure I felt in serving your sister, took away all merit from the act—but compliments at all times are very foolish things, so I will have done with them; and only say most truly, that I was delighted to serve your sister."

"I understand you now," said Captain Delaware; and then added, laughing, "but you are accustomed to fine speeches, and I am not, so forgive my first stupidity. I will take your compliment at its proper value; and will—as the merchants tell us when we put into a strange port—discount it to my sister at the current exchange."

While such conversation had been passing between them, and such thoughts had been busy in Captain Delaware's bosom, Burrel, without any definite purpose, made a wheel upon the bridge; and, in a moment after, they were walking through the town together, towards the lane which led to the widow's cottage. Captain Delaware remained silent, as he continued meditating for two or three minutes, till, remembering that the name of his sister—for whom he had a fund of deep love and respect, which influenced all his actions, even without his knowing it—had been the last upon their lips, and feeling that some inference of deeper moment might be drawn from his silence than he could desire, he

changed the subject, abruptly enough indeed, to make his sudden fit of thoughtfulness more liable to remark than if it had continued twice as long.

"Your servant," he said, "is certainly a descendant, not of Œdipus, but of his friend the Sphinx—which, by the way, our sailors, when we were at Alexandria, used always to call the Minx. I did not think I showed any very impertinent curiosity, but he could neither tell me where you had gone—which way you had turned when you left the door—when you were to be back—or, in short, any other fact concerning your movements this evening: for, feeling deeply indebted to you on poor Blanche's account, I wished to unload my bosom of its thanks."

"Oh, he is a discreet and sober personage, Master Harding," answered Burrel. "One of those men who have a great idea of not committing themselves; and I like him infinitely better than a plausible, fair-spoken knave that I had lately, who would not, or could not, loose my horse's girths if the groom were out of the way, and who left me because I did not allow my servants Madeira."

"I hope you threw him out of the window?" cried Captain Delaware, giving way to a burst of honest indignation.

"Oh, dear no!" answered Burrel, "I saw him depart through the usual aperture, with a degree of coolness and fortitude he did not expect; and after trying another, whom I did kick out, I was soon supplied with the present rascal, who is useful, silent, and circumspect. He cheats me in about the same proportion as the others, or rather less; is so far more honest, that he never pretends to honesty; and I have never yet discovered that he lets any other person cheat me besides himself."

"No very high character, either!" answered Captain Delaware.

"I beg your pardon!" cried Burrel. "Sufficient for a prime minister, and more than sufficient for a member of parliament.—But here we are at the cottage; I wonder if I dare intrude again upon Miss Delaware's presence?"

Captain Delaware made no difficulty, and a few minutes afterwards the whole party were observed—with Blanche hanging upon her brother's arm, and Burrel walking by her side, his handsome head bent down to speak and hear with the more marked attention—walking slowly along the lane under the park walk, till they reached the small door nearest to the mansion. There Burrel raised his hat, and took his leave; and while Miss Delaware and her brother entered the park,

he drew up his head, threw wide his shoulders, and, resuming his usual gait, returned to the town.

The person who had observed all this, and who declared positively that she had not walked that way on purpose, reported it all fully to the honest folks of Emberton, who instantly prognosticated a marriage. How desperately they were mistaken, remains to be shown.

Burrel returned to his house, dined without the slightest symptoms of love being discernible in the removed dishes; and ended the day by sleeping as devotedly as if he had been a sworn votary of Somnus, first telling his servant to see that all the fires were put out, as he had not the slightest inclination to be woke from his rest again. A fire on two consecutive nights, however, is not a piece of good fortune that happens to every man; and Burrel, after having slept one-third of the round dial undisturbed, woke the next morning, and sat down to breakfast, asking himself, What was to occur next?

Oh, that curious question, which has puzzled the wisest from the beginning of the world, and will puzzle them still, till the last day solves it for ever! What is to happen next?

It had scarcely passed through Burrel's brain, when the door opened, and Sir Sidney Delaware was announced. He entered the room slowly, as was his custom; but, as he did enter, Burrel at once perceived that a certain air of coldness —which, like the Mithridate of the ancients, defied all analysis from the multitude of ingredients that composed it— was altogether gone, and in its room there was a frank, bland smile, as he greeted him, which unloaded the baronet's brow of the wrinkles of full ten years.

"I have come to visit you, Mr. Burrel," said Sir Sidney Delaware, "at an unusual hour, solely because I wished to see you; and, if you will give me leave, I will take my coffee with you." Burrel rang the bell, and the necessary additions to his breakfast-table were soon completed, while he expressed politely, but neither coldly nor cordially, his pleasure at the visit of Sir Sidney Delaware.

"My first task, Mr. Burrel," said the baronet, mildly and kindly, "is to express my gratitude for the salvation of my dear child; and allow me to say, that no one who does not love her as I do, can feel what that gratitude is."

When a poor man and a proud man condescends to pour forth his feelings to his equal in mind and station, and his superior in more worldly wealth, it is a compliment which deserves instant return, and Burrel—though he had been

unwilling to risk for a moment a fresh advance, to be again repulsed—felt, from the whole tone and manner of his companion, that the barrier was broken down between them. To have held back would have been an insult, and he instantly replied, not in the set form which means no more than a copy-line to a schoolboy, but in those words and accents that conveyed fully to Sir Sidney Delaware, that he had felt a real and personal pleasure in serving his daughter in the manner that he had done. He spoke frankly, though guardedly, of the charms and graces of Miss Delaware's conversation and demeanour—he spoke more boldly and feelingly of the impression that the blending of sailor-like candour with gentlemanly feeling, in Captain Delaware, had produced upon his mind—and although Burrel alluded to these things in the tone of a man of the world, who had found out a treasure in pure nature that he had never before discovered, he did so without the slightest assumption of superiority; and both his words and his manner expressed alone unfeigned pleasure in the acquaintance he had made, and the service he had rendered.

"Enough!" cried Sir Sidney Delaware, interrupting him as he was going on in his encomiums. "I came here to thank you for what you have done for one of my children, not to hear praises of both, that might make my old eyes overflow. But, as you speak of my son, I must not only confess that I owe you thanks, but an apology which I have promised him to make you, for not calling on you before. In that voluminous catalogue of lies, which, like hackney-coaches on a stand, are ready at the beck of every one, I might find a hundred excuses ready-made to my hand, which you would be bound to receive as current; but my principles do not admit of my making use of them, and when I apologise at all, it must be by telling the truth. Unfortunate circumstances, Mr. Burrel," he added in a grave and somewhat sad tone, "have placed a painful disparity between the fortune and the station of my family. For myself, I do not covet wealth, neither do my children; but we have never sought, or even admitted, the society of any one who was likely to differ from us in our estimation of our own situation."

"Although such an apology is far more than I either deserve, or could expect," replied Burrel, "yet I own I am glad to find that you did not at all hate me for my own sake. As to my feelings and principles—if, as I hope, this acquaintance stops not here—you will soon find, my dear sir, that I am far too aristocratic in my own nature to dream that wealth can make any addition to rank—far too liberal in my own sentiments to dream that either wealth or rank can make any

addition to gentlemanly manners and a gentlemanly mind. Do not mistake me, Sir Sidney Delaware," he added, seeing a slight shade come over the baronet's countenance—"I have every reverence for the institutions of society, and for those grades which society can never be deprived of, without sinking gradually into barbarism of manners, if not barbarism of mind. All I mean to say is, when I pay reverence to rank, it is a tribute I render to society—when I pay reverence to the individual, it is a tribute I offer to virtue, and that tribute will be offered to either, under all circumstances, and at all times; but I have no idea of bowing low to the purse in a man's pocket, or fawning upon the bottle of Lafitte that graces his sideboard."

Sir Sidney Delaware smiled. "I am afraid, then," he replied, "you are unlike the majority of our young men at present. The worst kind of aristocracy—because it must always be too new a garment to sit easily—the aristocracy of wealth, is springing up each day as the idol for worship; and I am afraid every one who may be said to have a golden calf in their house, will find plenty of our Israelites willing to commit idolatry, though to the worship of wealth in others may be applied the memorable words with which Sallust stigmatises avarice itself—'Ea quasi venenis malis imbuta, corpus animumque virilem effæminat, semper infinita insatiabilis est; neque copiâ, neque inopiâ minuitur.' My own race have been too little followers of the blind god—I mean Plutus, not Cupid—and the effects you will see, if you do me the favour of dining in my poor house to-morrow."

"If I see yourself and family there, Sir Sidney Delaware, I shall certainly see nothing amiss, and probably nothing else; though," he added, feeling that the subject was one which had better be led into some other, as soon as possible, "though the house appears to be a very perfect and beautiful specimen of the peculiar kind of architecture to which it belongs."

"It is, indeed," replied the baronet, instantly mounting the hobby that Burrel set before him; "it is, indeed, perhaps the most perfect specimen of the architecture of the early part of Henry VIII. now in existence. It shows the first step from the pure Gothic to the pure Vandal, if I may so call it, which succeeded."

"Without pretending to be a connoisseur," replied Burrel, "I am certainly a great lover of architectural antiquities of all sorts; and I must endeavour to seduce you into pointing out all the peculiar characteristics of the place."

"I shall be delighted!" exclaimed Sir Sidney Delaware. "Let me beg you to come to-morrow early—come to break-

fast—and give us your whole day, if you can spare so much of your time, which is doubtless valuable."

"Perfectly worthless!" replied Burrel. "So, remember, if you find that I take you at your word, and bestow my whole day of tediousness upon you, it is your own fault; for you have invited me; and I shall look jealously for every yawn."

"No fear, my dear sir!" said the baronet. "I do not know how, Mr. Burrel, or why, but something in your aspect and manner make me feel as if you were an old friend."

"May you always feel so!" replied Burrel, with a smile of pleasure, which vouched that the words were more than mere form.

"Even your face," continued Sir Sidney, "comes upon me like a dream of the past, and I feel, in speaking with you, as if I had just got my studentship at Christ Church, and were in those bright days again when the boy, standing on the verge of manhood, grasps at the crown of thorns before him, as if it were a diadem of stars. However, I feel towards you like an old friend, and shall treat you as such, which means—as one of the flippant books of the present day asserts—that I shall give you a very bad dinner."

"Do!" cried Burrel, shaking the hand his guest held out to him as he was about to depart—"do, and I will find a way to avenge myself without difficulty."

"How do you mean?" demanded the baronet, pausing.

"By coming for another very soon," answered his companion. "So, I dare you to keep your word."

"I certainly shall," rejoined Sir Sidney Delaware, "if such be the penalty;" and they parted with feelings entirely changed on both sides since their meeting at the house of Mr. Tims.

CHAPTER VIII.

Whether the succeeding hours of the day on which Sir Sidney Delaware first visited Henry Burrel did or did not pass with any degree of impatience felt on the part of the latter, it is difficult to say. Burrel had an habitual dislike to the display of what he felt, and except on special occasions, where the stirred-up feelings broke through all customary restraint, there might be many far deeper things passing in his bosom than the eye of a casual observer could discover from his face.

Giving the necessary orders for his dressing apparatus to

be brought up to the mansion before dinner, Burrel sallied forth as soon as he was dressed, and took his way towards the park gate. He paused upon the bridge, however, and for a moment gazed up the long open space of park lawn, broken by old elms and oaks, with the stream flowing calmly on in the midst, and the swans dipping quietly into its waters, and the whole, in the soft morning sunshine, bearing an air of peace, with which even the grey building at the end of the vista harmonised full well.

With what other thoughts there might be in Burrel's bosom —and there were a good many different threads that ran across the web in various directions—we will have nothing to do here, but will follow the one continuous line which we began to trace before, and only consider the psychological phenomena that were passing in his heart as far as they related to Blanche Delaware.

At length he woke up at the door of the dwelling-house, and found himself as great an enthusiast at heart as ever lived and loved. Ascending the steps from the terrace, he rang the large bell, which was answered in a moment by the appearance of an honest-faced country servant, who was the only male domestic in a house which, had it been all inhabited, would have required a dozen at least. A little to the man's surprise, Burrel, who was still thinking of something else, and whose heart beat more than he thought proper, walked directly forward to the door of the library, and was raising his hand to open it, too, when, recollecting himself, he paused, and suffered the servant to announce him. His hand was cordially shaken by Captain Delaware, almost as he entered; and there was a glow of pleasure on the face of the young sailor, not only because he was really glad to see a man whom he personally liked, but that what he looked upon as a reproach to the hospitality of their house was wiped away.

Sir Sidney Delaware was at the further end of the room, which was well furnished—for books are always furniture—and they were many and choice. He, too, immediately rose, and advanced to welcome his guest most cordially; for the service that Burrel had rendered his child had completely opened his heart; and, when it was once opened, there was room enough within, though the door had been somewhat narrowed, in order to shut out the cold air of the world.

Burrel's eyes ran round the library, but Blanche Delaware was not there; and though he would have probably laughed, had any one called him a modest man, yet he found that he could not inquire after her with so easy an air as he might have done two or three days before, and therefore he did not

inquire after her at all, expecting every instant to see her appear. He felt uncomfortable, however, when her father at length proposed that they should go to the breakfast-room; and he asked himself whether she could be absent from home.

Burrel's mind was put at ease the moment after; for, on passing forward to the little breakfast-room—to which he seemed to find his way instinctively, without his host having to say, "Turn here!" or "Turn there!"—the first object that presented itself was Blanche Delaware, on hospitable thoughts intent, making the tea, and—as probably Eve was the most beautiful creature ever created—looking as like Eve as possible.

Blanche looked up as Burrel entered, and there were one or two slight circumstances which might have made him believe that his presence was not unpleasant to her, had he been in a mode to remark anything but the simple fact of her being there. There was the same fitful blush, the same sparkle of the eyes, that would not be repressed—the same sweet smile as he gave her the morning's greeting, which he had seen separately before; but, what was more to the purpose, she withdrew the tea-pot before she remembered to stop the urn, spilt the water on the table-cloth, and got into some confusion both at her embarrassment and its cause. Captain Delaware smiled; and Blanche, though she knew that her brother was not very, very learned in woman's heart, attributed more meaning to his smile than it deserved, and would have been more embarrassed still, had there not been a degree of warmth and a subdued tenderness in Burrel's manner that was very consoling. Now, had Blanche Delaware laid a systematic design against Burrel's heart, and had she endeavoured to make herself appear the very wife suited to him, from everything she had seen of his character, she would have taken great care not to let the urn deluge the table-cloth, and would have believed her whole plan ruined for ever, if she had done so; for Burrel had certainly, at Mrs. Darlington's, affected a sort of fastidiousness—altogether in jest, but done seriously enough to deceive—which would have rendered such a little accident fatal. But Blanche Delaware had not the slightest idea of such a design in the world. Burrel, it is true, was the handsomest man in person, and the most elegant man in manners, that she had ever met with. His character she had heard from Dr. Wilton—one she was accustomed to reverence. His conversation had pleased, amused, and fascinated her. At the risk of his own life he had carried her, close to his heart, through the midst of a tremendous fire. He had saved her life, and in the enthusiasm

of doing so, had called her "Dear girl!" and had perhaps pressed her a little closer to his bosom when he found that they were safe. Of the last particular, however, she was not quite sure; but so much does the heart of man expand to those we protect and save, that, even if he did, it was quite natural. All this had given her different feelings towards Burrel from those that she experienced towards any other man; and though she kept a tight rein upon imagination, and would not even suffer the sweet folly of castle-building to enter her heart in this instance, yet she felt sufficiently agitated and pleased by his presence to become alarmed at her own sensations, and to feel unwittingly consoled by the marked difference between his manner to herself and to others. She was therefore vexed at the little accident, it is true, but she was vexed solely because she thought it might betray more agitation than she believed that she felt; not because she feared, by a trifle, to lose a heart for which she had set no traps, and of whose possession she was determined not to dream at all.

It was about the time of some serious disturbances in France; and those events naturally suggested themselves, at least to the three gentlemen, as the most interesting topic of the day. "What think you, then, Mr. Burrel," demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, "of La —— coming forth in his old age to renew the scenes which, in his youth, he first excited, and then lamented?"

"The great misfortune is," replied Burrel, "that his name should be able to do so much, when he himself is unable to do anything."

"You mean that he is in his dotage," said Captain Delaware. "Is it not so?"

"I mean merely," replied Burrel, "that he is in that state of mental decrepitude, where the plaudits of a mob of any kind, either of porters or peers, would make him commit any folly for the brief moment of popularity. With poor old La —— it is only now the fag-end of the great weakness of his life, vanity—that sort of gluttonous vanity that can gorge upon the offal of base and ignorant applause."

"Ay, there lies the fault," replied Sir Sidney Delaware. "The man who seeks the applause of the good, the wise, and the generous, is next in honourable ambition to him who seeks the approbation of his God; but he whose depraved appetite finds food in the gratulating shout of an assemblage of the ignorant, the base, and the vicious—like—like—I could mention many, but I will not—he, however, who does so, is a moral swine, and only swills the filth of the public kennel in another sense."

"Papa, papa!" cried Blanche Delaware. "In pity, let me finish breakfast before you indulge in such figures of rhetoric. William, in mercy change the subject! Cannot you tell us some of those pretty stories about Sicily and its beloved Mongibeddo, with which you charmed my ears when first you came from the Mediterranean?"

"Not I, indeed, Blanche!" replied her brother; "for, on the faith of those stories, you had nearly persuaded my father to go abroad, which would not suit my views of promotion at all."

"And did Miss Delaware really wish to visit foreign lands?" demanded Burrel. "We should not easily have forgiven you."

"It was but to see all those things one dreams so much about," replied Blanche Delaware, "and to return to my own land after they were seen; for I can assure you, I have neither hope nor wish ever to find any country half so fair in my eyes as our own England."

"That is both just and patriotic," answered Burrel; "more than one-half of what we like in any and every land, is association, and if, without one classic memory of the great past, you were to visit Italy itself, half the marvels of that land of beauties would be lost. The Colosseum would stand a cold brown ruin, cumbering the ground; Rome, a dull heap of ill-assorted buildings; the Capitol a molehill, and the Tiber a ditch. But under the magic wand of association, everything becomes beautiful. It is not alone the memories of one age or of one great epoch that rise up to people Italy with majestic things; but all the acts of glory and of majesty that thronged two thousand years, before the eye of fancy, walk in grand procession through the land, and hang a wreath of laurels on each cold ruin as they pass. Yet it is all association; and where can we find such associations as those connected with our native land?"

The question was tolerably general, but the tone and manner were to Blanche Delaware; and she replied, "It would be difficult, I am afraid, to raise up for any country such as those you have conjured up for Italy; but still I should never be afraid of forgetting England. It is where I was born," she added, thinking over all her reasons for loving it, and looking down on the pattern on the table-cloth, as she counted them one by one; "I have spent in it so many happy hours and happy days. Everything in it is connected with some pleasant thought or some dear memory; and the associations, though not so grand, would be more sweet—though not so vast, would be more individual—would

not perhaps waken any very romantic feelings, but would come more home to my own heart."

Burrel answered nothing; but when she raised her eyes, which had been cast down while she spoke, they found his fixed upon her; and she felt from that moment that she was beloved.

Blanche Delaware turned very pale, though the consciousness was anything but painful. Is was so oppressive, however, that the agitation made her feel faint; but her brother's voice recalled her to herself.

"Well spoken, my dear little patriot sister!" he said; "but if you had been a sailor, like your brother, you would have added, that England is not wanting in associations of glory and freedom, and noble actions and noble endeavours; and in this view the associations connected with our native land are more extended than those of any other country; for in whatever corner of the world an Englishman may be, when he catches but a glimpse of the salt sea, the idea of the glory of his native land rushes up upon his mind, and he sees, waving before the eye of fancy, the flag that 'for a thousand years, has stood the battle and the breeze.'"

Burrel smiled; but there was no touch of a sneer in it. "The song from which you quote," he said, "must have been written surely under such enthusiasm as that with which you now speak. I know scarcely so spirit-stirring a composition in the English language. Indeed, all Campbell's smaller poems are full of the same 'vivida vis animi.'"

"And yet," said Sir Sidney Delaware, "you, as well as I, must have heard fools and jolter-heads say, that Campbell is no poet, because now and then, in his longer pieces, when he gets tired of the mere mechanism, he suffers a verse or two to become tame—out of pure idleness, I have no doubt."

"Those who say he is no poet, do not know what poetry is," replied Burrel, somewhat eagerly. "Scattered through every one of his poems there are beauties of the first order; and almost all of his smaller pieces stand perfectly alone in poetry. He has contrived sometimes to compress into four or five of the very shortest lines that can be produced, more than nine poets out of ten could cram into a long Spenserian stanza, with a thundering Alexandrine at the end."

"Do you know Mr. Campbell personally?" asked Miss Delaware.

"I do," answered Burrel, laughing; "but do not suppose my praise of him is exaggerated from personal friendship. On the contrary, I am bound, by all the laws and usages of the world in general, to hate him cordially."

"Indeed! and why so?" demanded Blanche, half afraid that she had touched upon some delicate subject.

"Simply because we differ on politics," answered Burrel. "Can there be a more mortal offence given or received?"

"As we are speaking of poets, however," continued Miss Delaware, "I will ask you one more question, Mr. Burrel. Do you know Wordsworth?"

"I am not so fortunate," answered Burrel; "for, though we should as certainly differ as we met, upon nine points out of ten, yet I should much like to know him."

"Then you know and esteem his works, of course?" said Miss Delaware.

"I know them well," replied Burrel; "but I do not like them so much as you do."

"Nay!" said Blanche Delaware. "I have said nothing in their favour. What makes you believe I admire them more than yourself?"

"Simply because everybody of taste must esteem them highly," replied Burrel; "and women who do esteem them, will always esteem them more than men can do. A woman's heart and mind, Miss Delaware, by the comparative freshness which it retains more or less through life, can appreciate the gentle, the sweet, and the simple, better than a man's; and thus, while the mightier and more majestic beauties of Wordsworth's muse affect your sex equally with ours, the softer and finer shades of feeling—the touches of artless nature and simplicity, which appear almost too weak for us, have all their full effect on you."

"But if you own that, and feel that," said Blanche Delaware, "why cannot you admire the same beauties?"

"For this reason," replied Burrel—"man's mental taste, like his corporeal power of tasting, gets corrupted, or rather paralysed, in his progress through the world, by the various stimulants he applies to it. He drinks his bottle of strong and heady wine, which gradually loses its effect, and he takes more, till at length nothing will satisfy him but Cayenne pepper."

"But if he appreciates gentler pleasures," said Captain Delaware, "he must be able in some degree to enjoy them."

"Of course," replied Burrel, "there are moments when the cool and pleasant juice of a peach, or the simple refreshment of a glass of lemonade, will be delightful; and in such moments it is, that he feels he has stimulated away a sense, and a delightful one. Thus with poetry, and literature in general; the mind, by reading a great many things it would be better without, loses its relish for everything that does not excite and heat the imagination, which is neither more nor

less than the mental palate; and though there are moments when the heart, softened and at ease, finds joys in all the sweet simplicity which would have charmed it for ever in an unsophisticated state, yet still it returns to Cayenne pepper, and only remembers the other feelings. as of pleasures lost for ever. With regard to Wordsworth's poetry, perhaps no one ever did him more injustice than I did once. With a very superficial knowledge of his works, I fancied that I despised them all; and it was only from being bored about them by his admirers, that I determined to read them, every line, that I might hate them with the more accuracy."

Blanche Delaware smiled, and her father spoke, perhaps, the feelings of both. "We have found you out, Mr. Burrel," he said, "and understand your turn for satirising yourself."

"I am not doing so now, I can assure you," replied Burrel. "What I state is exactly the fact. I sat down to read Wordsworth's works with a determination to dislike them, and I succeeded in one or two poems, which have been cried up to the skies; but, as I went on, I found so often a majestic spirit of poetical philosophy, clothing itself in the full sublime of simplicity, that I felt reproved and abashed, and I read again with a better design. In doing so, though I still felt that there was much amidst all the splendour that I could neither like nor admire, yet I perceived how and why others might and would find great beauties and infinite sweetness in that which palled upon my taste; and I perceived also, that the fault lay in me far more than in the poetry. The beauties I felt more than ever; and some of the smaller pieces, I am convinced, will live for ages, with the works of Shakspeare and Milton."

"They will, indeed," said Sir Sidney Delaware, "as long as there is taste in man. Nevertheless, the poet—who is, perhaps, as great a philosopher, too, as ever lived—has sacrificed, like many philosophers, an immense gift of genius to a false hypothesis in regard to his art, and has consequently systematically poured forth more trash than perhaps any man living. His poems, collected, always put me in mind of an account I have somewhere read of the diamond mines of Golconda, where inestimable jewels are found mingled with masses of soft mud. But you have long done breakfast, Mr. Burrel. Come, Blanche, I am going to take Mr. Burrel to the terrace, and descant most dully on all the antiquities of the house. Let us have your company, my love; for we shall meet with so many old things, it may be as well to have something young to relieve them!"

It required but a short space of time to array Blanche Delaware for the walk round the terrace that her father pro-

posed. In less than a minute she came down in the same identical cottage bonnet—the ugliest of all things—in which Burrel had first beheld her with her brother; but, strange to say, although on that occasion he had only thought her a pretty country girl, so changed were now all his feelings—so many beauties had he marked which then lay hid—that, as she descended with a smiling and happy face to join them at the door of the hall, he thought her the loveliest creature that he had ever beheld, in any climate, or at any time.

By the time the examination of the house itself was over, however, Sir Sidney Delaware felt fatigued. "I must leave Blanche and William, Mr. Burrel," he said, "to show you some of the traces of those antique times which we have just been talking of, that are scattered through the park, particularly on the side furthest from the town. I myself think them more interesting than the house itself, and wish I could go with you; but I am somewhat tired, and must deny myself the pleasure."

Burrel assured him that he would take nothing as a worse compliment than his putting himself to any trouble about him; and, perhaps not unwillingly, set out accompanied only by Blanche and her brother. It would have been as dangerous a walk as ever was taken had he not been in love already. There was sunshine over all the world, and the air was soft and calm. Their way led through the deep high groves and wilder park scenery that lay at the back of the mansion, now winding in amongst hills and dells covered with rich short grass, now wandering on by the bank of the stream, on whose bosom the gay-coated king-fishers and the dark water-hens were skimming and diving in unmolested security. In the open parts, the old hawthorns perched themselves on the knolls, wreathing their fantastic limbs in groups of two or three; and every now and then a decaying oak of gigantic girth, but whose head had bowed to time, shot out its long lateral branches across the water, over which it had bent for a thousand years.

The whole party were of the class of people who have eyes, as that delightful little book the Evenings at Home has it; and at present, though there were busy thoughts in the bosoms at least of two of those present, yet perhaps they strove the more to turn their conversation to external things, from the consciousness of the feelings passing within. Those feelings, however, had their effect, as they ever must have, even when the topics spoken of are the most indifferent. They gave life, and spirit, and brightness to everything.

Blanche Delaware, hanging on the arm of her brother, and yielding to the influence of the smiles that were upon the face

of nature, gave full way to her thoughts of external things as they arose; and, together with spirits bright and playful, but never what may be called high—with an imagination warm and brilliant, never wild—there shone out a heart that Burrel saw was well fitted to understand and to appreciate that fund of deeper feelings, that spring of enthusiasm, tempered a little by judgment, and ennobled by a high moral sense, which he concealed, perhaps weakly, from a world that he despised.

He felt at every step that the moments near her were almost too delightful; and, before he had got to the end of that walk, he had reached the point where love begins to grow terrified at its own intensity, lest the object should be lost on which the mighty stake of happiness is cast for ever.

Having proceeded thus far—which, by the way, is no small length; for the great difficulty, as Burrel found it, was to place himself fairly on a footing of friendship with Sir Sidney Delaware's family—we must unwillingly abandon the expatiative; and, having more than enough to do, leave the party on their walk, and turn to characters as necessary, but less interesting.

CHAPTER IX.

In the house of Lord Ashborough—which is situated in Grosvenor Square, fronting the south—there is a large room, which in form would be a parallelogram, did not one of the shorter sides—which, being turned to the north, looks out upon the little rood of garden attached to the dwelling—bow out into the form of a bay window. The room is lofty, and, as near as possible, twenty-eight feet in length by twenty-four in breadth. Book-cases, well stored with tomes in lettered calf, cover the walls, and a carpet, in which the foot sinks, is spread over the floor. Three large tables occupy different parts of the room. Two, covered with books and prints, lie open to the world in general, but the third, on which stand inkstands and implements for writing, shows underneath, in the carved lines of the highly-polished British oak, many a locked drawer. Each chair, so fashioned that uneasy must be the back that would not there find rest, rolls smoothly on noiseless castors, and the thick walls, the double doors, and book-cases, all combine to prevent any sound from within being caught by the most prying ear without, or any noise from without being heard by those within, except when some devil of a cart runs away in Duke Street, and goes clattering up that accursed back street behind.

About eleven o'clock Lord Ashborough himself entered the room; and before any one else comes in to disturb us, we may as well sit down and take a full-length picture of him. He was a man of about fifty-nine or sixty, tall and well-proportioned, though somewhat thin. His face was fine, but pale, and there was a great deal of intellect expressed on his broad brow and forehead, which looked higher than it really was, from being perfectly bald as far down as the sutures of the temples. From that point, some thin dark hair, grizzled with grey, spread down, and met his whiskers, which were of the same hue, and cut square off, about the middle of his cheeks. His eyes were dark blue, and fine, but somewhat stern, if not fierce, and in the space between his eyebrows there was a deep wrinkle, in which a finger might have been laid without filling up the cavity; the eyebrows themselves, though not very long, were overhanging; the nose was well formed and straight, though a little too long perhaps; but his mouth was beautifully shaped, and would have appeared the best feature in his face, had he not frequently twisted it in a very unbecoming manner, by gnawing his nether lip. His chin was round, and rather prominent; and his hand small, delicate, and almost feminine.

It is all nonsense that a man's dress signifies nothing. It is—if he takes any pains about it; and if he takes none, it comes to the same thing—it is the habitual expression of his mind or his mood; and in the little shades of difference which may exist with the most perfect adherence to fashion, you will find a language much easier read than any of those on the Rosetta stone. Lord Ashborough was dressed more like a young than an old man, though without any extravagance. His coat was of dark green, covering a double-breasted waistcoat, of some harmonising colour, while his long, thin, rather tight-fitting trousers, displayed a well-formed leg, and were met by a neat and highly-polished boot. Around his neck he wore a black handkerchief, exposing the smallest possible particle of white collar between his cheek and the silk; and on one of his fingers was a single seal ring. Taking him altogether he was a very good-looking man, rather like the late Mr. Canning, but with a much less noble expression of countenance.

Walking forward to the table, which we have noted as being well supplied with locks, Lord Ashborough opened one of the drawers, and, having rang the bell, sat down and took out some papers. The door opened; a servant appeared;—"Send in Mr. Tims!" said Lord Ashborough; and the man glided out. After a short pause, another person appeared, but of very different form and appearance from the servant;

and therefore we must look at him more closely. He was a short, stout, bustling-looking little man, of about thirty-eight or forty, perhaps more, habited in black, rather white at the seams and edges. His countenance was originally full and broad; but the habit of thrusting his nose through small and intricate affairs had sharpened that feature considerably; and the small black eyes that backed it, together with several red blotches, one of which had settled itself for life upon the tip of the eminence, did not diminish the prying and intrusive expression of his countenance. There was impudence, too, and cunning, written in very legible characters upon his face; but we must leave the rest to show itself as we go on.

As Mr. Peter Tims, of Clement's Inn, attorney-at-law—for such was the respectable individual of whom we now treat—entered the library of Lord Ashborough, he turned round and carefully closed the double door, and then, with noiseless step, proceeded through the room till he brought himself in face of his patron. He then made a low bow; and then advanced another step, and made another bow.

"Sit down, sit down, Mr. Tims!" said Lord Ashborough, without raising his eyes, which were running over a paper he had taken from the drawer. "Sit down, sit down, I say!"

Mr. Tims did sit down, and then, drawing forth some papers from a blue bag which he held in his hand, he began quietly to put them in order, while Lord Ashborough read on.

After a minute or two, however, his lordship ceased, saying, "Now, Mr. Tims, have you brought the annuity deed?"

"Here it is, my lord," replied the lawyer; "and I have examined it again most carefully. There is not a chink for a fly to break through. There is not a word about redemption from beginning to end. The money must be paid for the term of your lordship's natural life."

Lord Ashborough paused, and gnawed his lip for a moment or two. "Do you know, Mr. Tims," he said at length, "I have some idea of permitting the redemption. I am afraid we have made a mistake in refusing it."

Mr. Tims was never astonished at anything that a great man—*i. e.* a rich man—did or said, unless he perceived that it was intended to astonish him, and then he was very much astonished indeed, as in duty bound. It was wonderful, too, with what facility he could agree in everything a rich man said, and exclaim, "Very like an ousel!" as dexterously as Polonius, or a sick-nurse, though he had been declaring the same question "very like a whale!" the moment before. Nor was he ever at a loss for reasons in support of the new opinion implanted by his patrons. In short, he seemed to

have in his head, all ticketed and ready for use, a store of arguments, moral, legal, and philosophical, in favour of everything that could be done, said, or thought, by the wealthy or the powerful. In the present instance, he saw that Lord Ashborough put the matter as one not quite decided in his own mind; but he saw also, that his mind had such a leaning to the new view of the matter, as would make him very much obliged to any one who would push it over to that side altogether.

"I think your lordship is quite right," replied Mr. Tims. "You had every right to refuse to redeem if you thought fit; but at the same time, you can always permit the redemption if you like; and it might indeed look more generous—though, as I said before, you had every right to refuse. Yet perhaps, after all, my lord——"

"Tush! Do not *after all* me, sir," cried Lord Ashborough, with some degree of impatience, which led Mr. Tims to suspect that there was some latent motive for this change of opinion, which his lordship felt a difficulty in explaining, and which he, Mr. Tims, resolved at a proper time to extract by the most delicate process he could devise. "The means, sir," added Lord Ashborough, "the means are the things to be attended to, not the pitiful balancing of one perhaps against another."

"Oh, my lord! the means are very easy," replied Tims, rubbing his hands. "You have nothing to do but to send word down that your lordship is ready to accept, and any one will advance the means to Sir——"

"Pshaw!" again interrupted Lord Ashborough. "You do not understand me, and go blundering on;" and, rising from his chair, the peer walked two or three times up and down the room, gnawing his lip, and bending his eyes upon the ground. "There!" he cried at length, speaking with abrupt rudeness. "There! The matter requires consideration—take up your papers, sir, and begone! I will send for you when I want you."

Mr. Tims ventured not a word, for he saw that his patron had made himself angry with the attempt to arrange something in his own mind which would not be arranged; and taking up his papers, one by one, as slowly as he decently could, he deposited them in their blue bag, and then stole quietly towards the door. Lord Ashborough was still walking up and down, and he suffered him to pass the inner door without taking any notice; but, as he was pushing open the red baize door beyond, the nobleman's voice was heard exclaiming, "Stay, stay! Mr. Tims, come here!" The lawyer glided quietly back into the room, where Lord Ashborough

was still standing in the middle of the floor, gazing on the beautiful and instructive spots on the Turkey carpet. His reverie, however, was over in a moment, and he again pointed to the chair which the lawyer had before occupied, bidding him sit down, while he himself took possession of the seat on the other side of the table; and, leaning his elbow on the oak, and his cheek upon his hand, he went on in the attitude and manner of one who is beginning a long conversation. The commencement, however, was precisely similar to the former one, which had proved so short. "Do you know, Mr. Tims," he said, "I have some idea of permitting the redemption. I am afraid that we have made a mistake in refusing it;" but then he added, a moment after, "for the particular purpose I propose."

Mr. Tims was as silent as a mouse, for he saw that he was near dangerous ground; and at that moment six-and-eightpence would hardly have induced him to say a word—at least if it went further than, "Exactly so, my lord!"

The matter was still a difficult one for Lord Ashborough to get over; for it is wonderful how easily men can persuade themselves that the evil they wish to commit, is right; and yet how troublesome they find even the attempt to persuade another that it is so, although they know him to be as unscrupulous a personage as ever lived or died unhung. Now Lord Ashborough himself had no very high idea of the rigid morality of his friend Mr. Tims' principles, and well knew that his interest would induce him to do anything on earth; and yet, strange to say, that though Lord Ashborough only desired to indulge a gentlemanlike passion, which, under very slight modifications, or rather disguises, is considered honourable, and is patronised by all sorts of people, yet he did not at all like to display, even to the eyes of Mr. Tims, the real motive that was now influencing him. As it was necessary, however, to do so to some one, and he knew that he could not do so to any one whose virtue was less ferocious than that of Mr. Tims, he drew his clenched fist, on which his cheek was resting, half over his mouth, and went on.

"The fact is, you must know, Mr. Tims," he said, "this Sir Sidney Delaware is my first-cousin—but you knew that before. Well, we were never very great friends, though he and my brother were; and at college it used to be his pleasure to thwart many of my views and purposes. There is not, perhaps, a prouder man living than he is, and that intolerable pride, added to his insolent sarcasms, kept us greatly asunder in our youth, and therefore you see he has really no claim upon my friendship or affection in this business."

"None in the world!" cried Tims. "Indeed, all I wonder

at is, that your lordship does not use the power you have to annoy him!"

Mr. Tims harped aright, and it is inexpressible what a relief Lord Ashborough felt—one of the proudest men in Europe, by the way—at finding that the little, contemptible, despised lawyer, whom he looked upon, on ordinary occasions, as the dust under his feet, had, in the present instance, got the right end of a clue that he was ashamed or afraid to unwind himself. Besides, the way he put it gave Lord Ashborough an opportunity of *chucking* fine and generous, as the Westminster fellows have it; and he immediately replied—"No, sir, no! I never had any wish to annoy him. My only wish has been to lower that pride, which is ruinous to himself, and insulting to others; and I should not have even pursued that wish so far, had it not been that a circumstance happened which called us into immediate collision."

On finding that simple personal hatred and revenge—feelings that might have been stated in three words—were the real and sole motives which Lord Ashborough found it so difficult to enunciate, Mr. Tims chuckled; but mark me, I beg—it was not an open and barefaced cachination—it was, on the contrary, one of those sweet internal chuckles that gently shake the diaphragm and the parietes of the abdomen, and cause even a gentle percussion of the ensiform cartilage, without one muscle of the face vibrating in sympathy, or the slightest spasm taking place in the trachea or epiglottis. There is the anatomy of a suppressed chuckle for you! The discovery, however, was of more service than in the simple production of such agreeable phenomena. Mr. Tims perceiving the motive of his patron, perceived also the precise road on which he was to lead, and instantly replied, "Whatever circumstance called your lordship into competition with Sir Sidney Delaware, must of course have been very advantageous to yourself, if you chose to put forth your full powers. But that, let me be permittted to say, is what I should suspect, from all that I have the honour of knowing of your lordship's character, you would not do. For I am convinced you have already shown more lenity than was very consistent with your own interest, and perhaps more than was even beneficial to the object; but I humbly crave your lordship's pardon for presuming to——"

Lord Ashborough waved his hand. "Not at all, Mr. Tims! Not at all!" he said. "Your intentions, I know, are good. But hear me. We came in collision concerning the lady whom he afterwards married, and made a well-bred beggar of. He had known her, and, it seems, obtained promises from her before I became acquainted; and though a

transitory fancy for her took place in my own bosom,"—and Lord Ashborough turned deadly pale,—"yet of course when I heard of my cousin's arrangements with her, I withdrew my claims, without, as you say, exerting power that I may flatter myself——"

He left the sentence unfinished, but he bowed his head proudly, which finished it sufficiently; and Mr. Tims immediately chimed in, "Oh, there can be no doubt—if your lordship had chosen—Who the deuce is Sir Sidney Delaware, compared——" &c. &c. &c. &c.

"Well, I forgot the matter entirely," continued Lord Ashborough, in a frank and easy tone, for it is wonderful how the lawyer's little insignificances helped him on. "Well, I forgot the matter entirely."

"But you never married any one else," thought the lawyer, "and you remember it now." All this was thought in the lowest possible tone, so that Satan himself could hardly hear it—but Lord Ashborough went on. "I never, indeed, remembered the business more, till, on lending the money to his father, I found from a letter which the late man let me see, that the present man had not forgiven me some little progress I had made in the lady's affection. He said—I recollect the words very well—he said, that he could have borne his father borrowing the money at any rate of interest from any person but myself, who had endeavoured to supplant him—and all the rest that you can imagine. Well, from that moment I determined to bow that man's pride, for his own sake, as well as other people's. I thought I had done so pretty well too; but, on my refusing to suffer the redemption—which no one can doubt that I had a right to do—he wrote me that letter;" and his lordship threw across the table, to his solicitor, the letter which he had taken out of the drawer, just as the other entered. It was in the form of a note, and couched in the following terms:—

"Sir Sidney Delaware acknowledges the receipt of Lord Ashborough's letter, formally declining to accept the offer he made to redeem the annuity chargeable upon the estate of Emberton. The motives, excuses, or apologies—whichever Lord Ashborough chooses to designate the sentences that conclude his letter—were totally unnecessary, as Sir Sidney Delaware was too well acquainted with Lord Ashborough, in days of old, not to appreciate fully the principles on which he acts at present.

"Emberton, 1st September, 18—."

"Infamous! brutal! heinous!" cried Mr. Tims. "What

does your lordship intend to do? I hope you will, without scruple, punish this man as he deserves. I trust that, for his own sake, you will make him feel that such ungrateful and malignant letters as that, are not to be written with impunity —ungrateful I may well call them! for what course could your lordship have to write to him at all, except to soften the disappointment you conceived he would feel?"

"You say very true, Mr. Tims," replied Lord Ashborough, with a benign smile. "You say very true, indeed; and I do think myself, in justice to society, bound to correct such insolence, though, perhaps, I may not be inclined to carry the chastisement quite so far as yourself."

"Nothing could be too severe for such a man!" cried Mr. Tims, resolved to give his lordship space enough to manœuvre in. "Nothing could be too severe!"

"Oh! that is saying too much," said Lord Ashborough. "We will neither hang him, Mr. Tims, nor burn him in the hand, if you please;" and he smiled again at his own moderation.

"A small touch of imprisonment, however, would do him a world of good," said Mr. Tims, feeling his ground—Lord Ashborough smiled benignly a third time. "But the mischief is," continued the lawyer, "he pays the annuity so regularly that it would be difficult to catch him."

"That is the reason why I say we have done wrong in refusing to allow the redemption," rejoined the peer. "Do you not think, Mr. Tims, some accident might occur to stop the money which he was about to borrow for the purpose of redeeming? and if we could but get him to give bills payable at a certain day, we might have him arrested, in default?"

The lawyer shook his head. "I am afraid, my lord, if you had permitted the redemption, the money would have been ready to the minute," he said. "My uncle, I hear, was to have raised it for him; and, as he was to have had a good commission, it would have been prepared to the tick of the clock."

"And was your uncle to have lent the money himself, sir?" demanded Lord Ashborough, with a mysterious smile of scorn. "Did your uncle propose to give the money out of his own strongbox?"

"No, my lord, no!" replied Tims, eagerly; "no, no! He would not do that without much higher interest than he was likely to have got. Had he been the person, of course your lordship might have commanded him; but it was to be raised from some gentleman connected with Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson—a very respectable law house, indeed!"

"Some gentleman connected with Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson!" repeated Lord Ashborough, curling his haughty lip; "and who do you suppose that gentleman is but my own nephew, Harry Beauchamp?"

The lawyer started off his chair with unaffected astonishment, the expression of which was, however, instantly mastered, and down he sat again, pondering, as fast as he could, the probable results that were to be obtained from this very unexpected discovery. Some results he certainly saw Lord Ashborough was prepared to deduce; and he knew that his only plan was to wait the development thereof, assisting as much as in him lay the parturition of his patron's designs. But Lord Ashborough having spoken thus far, found very little difficulty in proceeding.

"The simple fact is this, Mr. Tims," he said: "Harry Beauchamp, full of all the wild enthusiasm which would have ruined his father, if we had not got him that governorship in which he died, to my certain knowledge has gone down to Emberton, with the full determination of assisting these people, of whom his father was so fond. I have reason to think even, that the coming up of that young man, the son, was at Henry's instigation, although they affected not to know each other, and I am told carried their dissimulation so far as to pass each other in the hall as strangers. At all events, they went down together in a stage-coach, and are now, beyond all doubt, laying out their plans for frustrating all my purposes."

"Shameful, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Tims.

"On Harry's part," replied Lord Ashborough, affecting a tone of candour and moderation, "on Harry's part it is but a piece of boyish enthusiasm—a touch of his father's folly. I love the boy, who, as you know, will succeed me—when it pleases Heaven," he added, piously, "to remove me from this life. I love the boy, and I do not choose to see him spend his splendid fortune, which will make a noble addition to the family estates, upon a set of mean and designing beggars: and I wish at once to punish them for their low and cunning schemes, and to save my nephew from their snares. Can we not, Mr. Tims, do you think, hit upon some plan by which this may be effected?"

"Why, my lord," replied Mr. Tims, hesitating slightly, for he was totally unprepared either for the intelligence he had received, or the demand that followed it; "why, my lord, your lordship's views are as kind and generous as usual; and doubtless, doubtless we may soon devise some means by which your lordship's nephew may be extricated from this little entanglement—but it will, of course, require thought—

though perhaps your lordship's clear and perspicuous mind may have already devised some project. Indeed, I cannot doubt it," he added, seeing a slight but well-satisfied smile cross the features of the noble earl. "Your lordship has so much of what Burke used to call creative talent, that I doubt not you have already discovered the fitting means, and only require an agent in your most devoted servant."

"Something more, Mr. Tims, something more than a mere agent," replied Lord Ashborough. "I require your legal advice. We must proceed cautiously, and not suffer either zealous indignation, or regard for my nephew, to lead us into anything that is not quite lawful. A slight scheme of the matter may, indeed, have suggested itself to my mind, but I want you to consider it well, and legalise it for me, as well as some of the details. Could we not, I say—could we not—it is but a supposition, you know, sir—could we not give notice to this Sir Sidney Delaware, that we are willing to permit the redemption; and even to give him time to pay the money, cancelling, in the meantime, the annuity deed——"

"Not before you have got the amount!" exclaimed the lawyer, in unutterable astonishment.

"Yes, sir, before I have got the amount," replied Lord Ashborough, phlegmatically, "but not before I have got bills or notes of hand, payable within a certain time, and with an expressed stipulation, that unless those are duly paid the annuity itself holds in full force."

"Ay; but if they be paid, my lord," cried Mr. Tims, "the annuity is at an end; and then where is your lordship?"

"But cannot we find means to stop their being paid, Mr. Tims?" said Lord Ashborough, fixing his eyes steadily upon the lawyer. "In all the intricate chambers of your brain, I say, is there no effectual way you can discover to stop the supplies upon which this Delaware may have been led to reckon, and render him unable to pay the sum on the day his bills fall due? Remember, sir, your uncle is the agent, as I am led to believe, between this person and my nephew. Harry Beauchamp, forsooth, has too fine notions of delicacy to offer the money in his own person; but he is the man from whom the money is to come, and it has been for some weeks lodged in the hands of Steelyard and Wilkinson, his solicitors, awaiting the result—that is to say, the whole of it except ten thousand pounds in my hands, which I have promised to sell out for him to-morrow, and pay into their office. Are there no means, sir, for stopping the money?"

"Plenty, plenty, my lord!" replied the lawyer. "The only difficulty will be the choice of them. But, first, cannot your lordship refuse to pay the ten thousand?"

"That will not do," answered the peer. "I know Harry well; and his first act would be to sell out the necessary sum to supply the deficiency. You must devise something else."

"Let us make the bills payable at Emberton, my lord," said the attorney; "at the house of my uncle. Mr. Beauchamp must then either come to town for the money, or send send some one to receive it; and in either case it may be stayed."

"How so?" demanded Lord Ashborough. "If he come, the matter is hopeless. He has sold out of the army, too; so there is no chance of his being called away there."

"Ay; but there is a little process at law going on against him, my lord," replied the attorney, "of which he knows nothing as yet. Some time ago, he threw the valet he had then, down stairs, head foremost, for seducing the daughter of his landlady. The fellow has since prosecuted him for assault, and served the process upon me, whom he employed in the affair. I am not supposed to know where he is, so that the matter may be easily suffered to go by default; and, one way or another, we can contrive to get him arrested for a day or two, no doubt—especially as it is all for his own good and salvation, I may call it."

"Certainly, certainly!" answered Lord Ashborough. "I should feel no scruple in doing so; for no one could doubt that I am actuated alone by the desire of keeping him from injuring himself. But suppose he sends, Mr. Tims?"

"Why, that were a great deal better still!" said the lawyer. "The only person he could send would be his servant, Harding, who owes me the place; and who, between you and me, my lord, might find it difficult to keep me from transporting him to Botany Bay, if I chose it. He would doubtless be easily prevailed upon to stop the money for a time, or altogether, if it could be shown him that he could get clear off, and the matter would be settled for ever."

There was a tone of familiarity growing upon the lawyer, as a natural consequence of the edifying communion which he was holding with his patron, that rather displeased and alarmed Lord Ashborough, and he answered quickly, "You forget yourself, sir! Do you suppose that I would instigate my nephew's servant to rob his master?"

Mr. Peter Tims had perhaps forgot himself for the moment; but he was one of those men that never forget themselves long; and, as crouching was as natural to him as to a spaniel, he was instantly again as full of humility and submission as he had been previously to the exposé which had morally sunk Lord Ashborough to a level with Mr. Tims.

"No, my lord! No!" he exclaimed, eagerly; "far be it from me to dream for one moment that your lordship would form such an idea. All I meant was, that this servant might easily be induced to delay the delivery of the money, on one pretext or another, till it be too late; and if he abscond—which perchance he might do, for his notions concerning property, either real or personal, are not very clearly defined—your lordship could easily intend to make it good to Mr. Beauchamp."

"I do not know what you propose that I should easily intend, Mr. Tims," replied Lord Ashborough; "but I know that it would not sound particularly well if this man were to abscond with the money, and there were found upon his person any authorisation from me to delay discharging his trust to his master."

"Oh, my lord, that difficulty would be easily removed!" answered Mr. Tims. "The law is very careful not to impute evil motives where good ones can be made apparent. It will be easy to write a letter to this man—what one may call a fishing letter—to see whether he will do what we wish, but stating precisely that your lordship's sole purpose and view is to save your nephew from squandering his fortune in a weak and unprofitable manner. We can keep a copy, properly authenticated: then, should he abscond and be caught with the letter on him, your lordship will be cleared; while if, on being taken, he attempt to justify himself at your lordship's expense, the authenticated copy will clear you still."

"That is not a bad plan," said Lord Ashborough, musing. "But what if he draw for the money through your uncle, Mr. Tims? Do you think the old man could be induced to detain the money, or to deny its arrival for a day or two?"

"Why, I fear not, my lord," answered the other, shaking his head; "I fear not—he was five-and-thirty years a lawyer, my lord, and he is devilish cautious. But I will tell you what I can do. I can direct him to address all his letters, on London business, under cover to your lordship: which will save postage—a great thing in his opinion—and, as he holds a small share of my business still, I can open all the answers. So that we will manage it some way."

Lord Ashborough paused and mused for several minutes, for though his mind was comparatively at ease in having found his lawyer so eager and zealous in his co-operation, yet a certain consciousness of the many little lets and hindrances that occur in the execution of the best-laid schemes, made him still thoughtful and apprehensive. Did you ever knit a stocking? No! nor I either—nor Lord Ashborough, I dare say, either. Yet we all know, that in the thousand and one

stitches of which it is composed, if a single one be missed, down goes the whole concatenation of loops, and the matter is just where it began, only with a ravelled thread about your fingers and thumbs, which is neither pleasant nor tidy. This consideration had some weight with the earl; so, after thinking deeply for several minutes, he rejoined,—"The matter seems clear enough, Mr. Tims, but I will put it to yourself whether you can carry it through successfully or not. Hear me to an end, sir—I will on no account agree to the redemption of the annuity, if you are not certain of being able to bring about that which we propose. So, do not undertake it unless you can do so. If you do undertake it, the odds stand thus—You have five hundred pounds in addition to your fees if you be successful, but, if you fail, you lose my agency for ever."

"My lord," replied Tims, who was not a man to suppose that cunning could ever fail, "I will undertake the business and the risk. But, of course, your lordship must give me all your excellent advice, and your powerful assistance. In the first place, you must allow me to bid my uncle to send all his letters, and direct all the answers to be sent under cover to your lordship, and, in the next place, you must allow me to write immediately to this man Harding in your name."

"Not without letting me see the letter!" exclaimed Lord Ashborough. "But that of course; and if you succeed, the five hundred pounds are yours."

"Your lordship is ever generous and kind," replied Peter Tims; "and I will undertake to carry the matter through; but only"—and Mr. Tims was honest for once in his life, from the fear of after consequences—"but only I am afraid your lordship will not find that the result will put this Sir Sidney Delaware so completely in your power as you think."

"How so?" demanded Lord Ashborough, turning upon him almost fiercely. "How so, sir? How so?"

"Why, my lord," replied Mr. Tims, in a low and humble tone, "even suppose he is arrested, depend upon it he will very easily find some one to lend him the money on the Emberton estates, to take up the bills he has given."

The Earl's eye flashed, and the dark and bitter spirit in his heart broke forth for the first time unrestrained. "Let me but have him in prison!" he exclaimed; "let me but have him once in prison, and I will so complicate my claims upon his pitiful inheritance, and so wring his proud heart with degradations, that the beggar who robbed me of my bride shall die as he has lived, in poverty and disappointment!" and in the vehemence with which the long-suppressed passion

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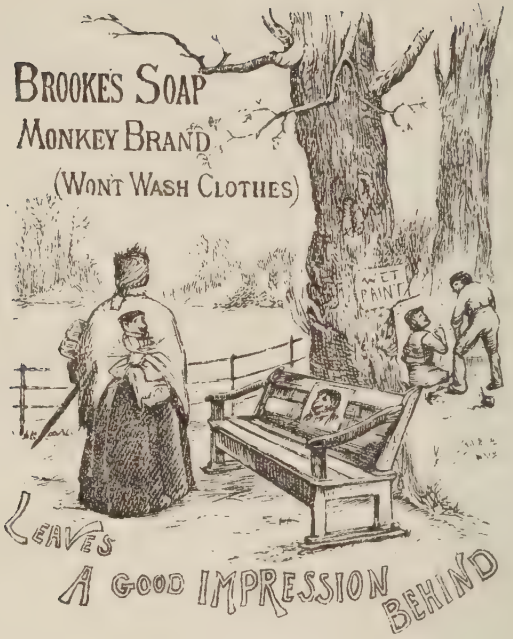

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burst forth, he struck his hand upon the table, till the ink-glasses danced in their stand.

Mr. Tims could understand envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; but he was cowed by such vehemence as that into which the bare thought of seeing his detested rival in prison had betrayed his noble patron. Feeling, too, that he himself was not at all the sort of spirit to rule the whirlwind and direct the storm, he said a few quiet words about preparing everything, and waiting on his lordship the next morning, and slunk away without more ado.

CHAPTER X.

Although we have now brought up the events in London nearly to the same point as the events in the country, we must still leave Henry Burrel strolling on through Emberton Park beside Blanche Delaware, while we turn for a moment to his silent servant, who having, on the same morning, walked with his usual slow and quiet step to the post-office, brought home, and deposited upon his master's table, two or three letters, after first gleaning every possible information that their outside or their inside could furnish. He then proceeded to inspect the contents of another epistle, which bore his own name and superscription. The words therein written had a considerable effect upon him, causing more twitches and contortions of the muscles of his countenance than was usually visible upon that still and patient piece of furniture. The first expression was certainly full of pleasure; but that soon relapsed into deep thought, and then a grave shake of the head, and close setting of the lower jaw, might be supposed to argue a negative determination. "No, no, Mr. Tims," he muttered, "that won't do! If one could make sure of getting clear off—well and good. But first, there is the chance of my not being sent for the money—then you would take good care to have me closely watched; and then, again, I do not know whether the chance here at Emberton may not be worth ten of the other—and I may come in for my share of the other too. No, no, Mr. Tims, it won't do!—so I will come the conscientious upon you." And down he sat to indite an epistle to Mr. Peter Tims, the agent of Lord Ashborough. It was written in one of those fair, easy, but vacillating running-hands, which bespeak a peculiar and inherent gift or talent for committing forgery; and was to the following effect:—

"Emberton, September 18—."

"Sir—Your honoured letter was duly received this morning; and I hasten to reply, as in duty bound. I am very sure that such honourable gentlemen as my lord the Earl and yourself would not undertake anything but upon good and reasonable grounds; but, hoping that you will pardon my boldness in saying so much, yet I cannot imagine that I have any other than a straightforward duty to perform—namely, when my master sends me for any sum of money, or other valuable thing, to hasten to give it up into his hands as soon as I have received it; which I would certainly do, in case he should send me up to London, although I do not think it probable he will. It is very true, certainly, that I do not think our notions of property are very confined and wrong; and that no man should have at his disposal a superabundance, while another man is wanting the necessaries, or even conveniences, of life; and that, if things were equally distributed, a better system must spontaneously arise. This much I have learned by reading; and I heartily wish that the principles of regeneration, which are at present in active existence amongst the operative classes, may go on to complete a change of the old corrupt system. Nevertheless, until such time as the intellect of the country in general shall have worked such results, I can be doing no wrong in following the laws and usages established; and shall, consequently, abstain from acting upon the abstract principles of general utility, until such time as the general welfare may require a physical demonstration of popular opinion.

"In regard to certain passages of my past life, to which you are pleased to refer; although I believe that I could perfectly justify myself upon my own fixed principles for everything that I have done through life, yet I am sorry that anything should have occurred to make you for a moment doubt the integrity of a person you strongly recommended to Mr. Beauchamp; and I am determined to do nothing that shall confirm any evil opinion you may have unfortunately been led to form, or to make my master regret having listened to the recommendation which you formerly thought fit to give your very humble and most obedient servant,

"Stephen Harding."

Having penned this delectable epistle, and read it over more than once, with much genuine satisfaction at the skill with which he had endeavoured to raise his own character, while rejecting the offers of Mr. Tims, Harding sealed it up, and hastened to put it in the post. He then sauntered slowly through the town; and having visited the widow's cottage,

and conversed for a few minutes with her son, he proceeded to walk on in the same direction which we have seen Burrel pursue upon a former occasion, shortly after his first arrival at Emberton. The purpose of the silent servant, however, was not to visit the old miser of Ryebury in person; and, ere he had gone a quarter of a mile upon the road, he was joined by a bold vulgar personage who had, during part of the journey, occupied a place in the stage-coach which brought his master to Emberton.

They met evidently as old and familiar friends, and with that sort of easy nonchalance which bespoke that their meeting was not unexpected. The servant pursued his way, scarcely pausing to say the necessary passwords of civility, and the other, turning onward upon the same path, walked by his side, with his arms bent behind his back, conversing, not exactly in an under voice, but rather in that between-the-teeth sort of tone, which renders what is said more difficult to be understood by any one not quite near, than even a whisper.

The terms in which they spoke, also, were somewhat enigmatical, and none, probably, but the initiated, could have discovered their views or purposes by such terms as the following.

"I have just been thinking last night, Master Harding," said his new companion, "that we had better get the other job done as soon as possible. We are wasting time, I thinks, and it seems to me as how you are growing something squeamish."

"You are a fool, Tony," replied Harding, civilly—"you are a fool for thinking anything of the kind. I'll tell you what, you may count yourself extremely well off that you have fallen in with a man of principle and education like myself, or you would have put your neck in a noose long ago. You take no extended views of things; and, instead of acting upon principle, which would always make you cautious in regard to times and seasons, and means and methods, you go bolt on, and would run your head into the stone pitcher, if I were not to pull you back by the heels."

"Well, I think you're a rum covey, now!" replied the other; and was proceeding in the same strain, when he was stopped by his companion exclaiming, — "Hush, hush! Curse your slang, it will betray you as soon as the mark of the hot iron would. Look here, now. I am no more squeamish than you are. I always act upon principle; and as to the job before us, considering the sum of general utility that is to be gained, I see no objection to doing the matter completely—I mean, making a finish of it. You understand?

But where is the hurry? Let us go cautiously to work, learn our ground, and get everything prepared. I say, where's the hurry?"

"As to the matter of that," answered the other, "there mayn't be no great hurry, to be sure. But we're both wasting our time somewhat; and, besides, they are looking out sharp after that other job—you see they have digged for the plate like mad—so that there is no use staying longer nor necessary, you know."

"Don't be afraid!" answered Harding, coolly, "they can make nothing of that. Besides, look here, Smithson; if we wait four or five days longer, there will be five-and-twenty thousand pounds down from London."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Anthony Smithson, laying one finger on the side of his nose. "That is a go. But are you sure?"

"I never say anything without being sure," answered Harding, with laconic pomposity. "So make yourself easy on that score. I say there will be five-and-twenty thousand pounds down in three or four days; and if I know the old man right, the larger half will be in gold. Have you tried Sally the maid?"

"It won't do!" answered the other, with somewhat of a rueful face. "She has lived long enough with that old fellow to be as cautious as a beak."

"Well, I suppose I must do that too!" answered the valet; "though it is a little tiresome, Master Smithson, that all the hard work is to fall upon me."

"Why, how the devil can I help it, Harding?" replied the other. "If the girl will have nothing to say to me, what can I do, you know? No, no, when it comes to the real hard work, you never find me behind!"

"Well, well," answered his worthy coadjutor, "I must come round her myself somehow, though she be but a dirty trapesing slut, that a man of gentlemanly feelings will find some difficulty in making love to; but, nevertheless, when one acts upon principle, one learns to overcome one's repugnance to such things, from a consideration of the mass of general utility to be obtained by a trifling sacrifice."

His companion grinned, but he was too well accustomed to Mr. Harding's method of reasoning to express any further surprise. After a few words more on both sides, however, as they judged it expedient to be seen together as little as possible, these two respectable persons separated, and, while Anthony Simpson returned to the town, Harding pursued his way onward; and, having on the strength of the communication he had received, determined to proceed to Ryebury, he

took the same path that Burrel had followed before him. The beauties of nature occupied less of his thoughts than those of his master; and while, with solemn steps and slow, he wandered on his way, his ideas were much fuller of shillings and sixpences, and trips across the Atlantic, than of the verdant mead and purling stream.

Master Harding was by no means an ugly person: and the charms of his good looks, together with a marvellous sweet voice, and a good deal more eloquence of its own peculiar kind than any one could have suspected him to possess from his usual taciturnity, he was what the French render, with somewhat profligate decency, by calling the persons so gifted 'un homme à bonnes fortunes.' His expedition against the heart of Sally, the miser's maid, was more successful than that of his companion had been, and he returned home flattering himself on having made more progress than he had anticipated. In fact, he had been fortunate in finding Mr. Tims out, and Sally at home; but as the intrigues of a slattern and a valet form no part of the staple of this book, we shall leave the matter as it is, without any further elucidation.

In the meanwhile, Burrel—for so we shall still call him—had sauntered on, whiling away the golden minutes of a fair day, on the early side of thirty, in sweet conversation beside a beautiful girl. I have described what their conversation was like before, and I leave every one who can remember what were the sensations he experienced when deep and fervent love just began to break upon his heart, to imagine how sweet were the winged minutes as they flew. Even the unspoken consciousness was not a burden, but a joy; and though Blanche Delaware might be said to tremble at the feelings that were growing upon her, yet there was a sort of vague internal conviction that those feelings were reciprocal—that they could not thus have crept over her heart unless some, nay many, of the signs of similar sentiments, on his side, had been sufficiently displayed to make her feel secure that she did not love unsought. Still there would every now and then come a shrinking apprehension across her mind, that she might be deceived—that it might be all merely a courteous and engaging manner, the same towards every one, which she in her ignorance had vainly fancied particular to herself. But those thoughts were but for a moment; and as Burrel walked onward by her side, there was in his tone, in his manner, and still more in the current through which all his thoughts appeared now to flow, a balmy influence that seemed to soothe away every fear. She knew not well whence she derived that balm; for had she tried—which, by the way, she did not—she could not have found one particular word he

spoke, which was more appropriate to the vocabulary of love than to Johnson's Dictionary. It was, perhaps — but she knew nothing about it—it was, perhaps, that pouring forth of the soul upon every topic, which can never take place but in conversation with one we love and esteem; for the hours of love are like a sunshiny day in the midst of summer, and all the flowers open, and the birds sing, and the bright things come forth through the heart's universe. It was this, perhaps, more than aught else in Burrel's manner, that made Blanche Delaware believe that she herself was loved.

"I thought," said Burrel, at length, "that we were to meet with some antiquities—even more interesting than the house itself—at least, your father said so;" and conscious that he had made an awkward speech, and very little to the purpose, Burrel looked up and smiled, though many other men would have looked down and coloured.

"You are not far from them," replied Captain Delaware—for Blanche's eyes were fixed upon the ground, and her thoughts were—not at Nova Zembla. "But surely you are not tired?"

"Anything but tired," answered Burrel; "but your father declared he would catechise me upon these ruins severely, and I was only afraid that I should forget them altogether."

"A piece of inattention which Blanche or I would excuse much more readily than my father," replied the good-humoured sailor. "But we are close upon them. You see those two wooded banks that fall across each other, with the stream flowing out in foam from between them? They form the mouth of a little glen, about a hundred yards up which stands the Prior's Fountain, and further still, the Hermit's Chapel. In architecture, I believe, they are unique, and there is many a curious tradition about both."

"Hush, hush, William!" cried his sister, seeing him about to proceed, "never tell the traditions but upon the spot. Oh, an old legend, in these days of steam and manufactory, can never be properly told, except under the grey stone and the ivy, where the memories of a thousand years are carved by the chisel of time on every tottering pinnacle and mouldering cornice, which vouch, by their unusual forms, for the strange stories of their founders!"

"Oh, let us go on, by all means!" said Burrel, smiling; "an old legend is worthy of every accessory with which we can furnish it.—But there it is," he added, as they turned the angle of the bank, and, entering the little glen, had before them a small Gothic building, covered with the richest ornaments of the most luxurious age of Norman architecture. "That, I suppose, is the chapel?"

"No, that is the Prior's Fountain," answered Captain Delaware; "and certainly the monks must have attached some peculiar importance to it, from covering it over with so splendid a structure."

Another minute brought them near it, and Burrel found that, under a beautiful canopy of stone-work, supported by eight cluster pillars, was placed a small stone fountain, full of the most limpid water, which, welling from a basin somewhat like the baptismal font of a Gothic church, poured through a little channel in the pavement, and thence made a small sparkling stream, which joined the larger one ere it had run fifty yards. Attached to the basin by an iron chain, was a cup of the same metal, of very ancient date, though, perhaps, more modern than the fountain. This cup, as soon as they approached, Captain Delaware dipped into the water, and, laughing gaily, held it to Burrel.

"You must drink of the Prior's Fountain, Mr. Burrel," he said; "but listen, listen, before you do so. The monks, you know, having vowed celibacy, found that the less they had to do with love the better; and it being luckily discovered that the waters of this well were a complete and everlasting cure for that malady, one of the priors covered it over, as you see, and enjoined that, on commencing his noviciate at Emberton, every pseudo monk should be brought hither, and made to drink one cup of the water. It is added, that the remedy was never known to fail; and now, with this warning, Burrel, drink if you will."

Burrel by this time had the cup in his hand, and for a single instant his eyes sought those of Blanche Delaware. She was looking down into the fountain, with one hand resting on the edge. There was a slight smile upon her lip, but there was a scarcely perceptible degree of agitation in her aspect, at the same time, which Burrel understood—or, at least, hoped—might have some reference to himself, although she might believe as little as he did in the efficacy of the waters of the fountain.

"No, no!" he replied at once, giving back the cup to Captain Delaware, and laughing lightly, as people do when they have very serious feelings at their hearts—"no, no! I dare not drink of such waters. They are too cold in every sense of the word to drink, after such a walk as this. The very cup has frozen my hand!" he added, to take out any point that he might have given to his speech.

"He is actually afraid, Blanche!" cried her brother, laughing. "Come, show him what a brave girl you are, and drain the cup to the bottom!"

"No, indeed!" answered Blanche Delaware. "Mr. Burrel

is very right. The water is a great deal too cold!" And, as she spoke, she blushed till the tell-tale blood spread rosy over her fair forehead, and tingled in her small rounded ear.

"Cowards both, as I live!" cried Captain Delaware, drinking off the contents, and letting the cup drop—"cowards both, as I live!" and, springing across the little streamlet, he took two or three steps onward, towards the chapel.

"Let me assist you across!" said Burrel, offering his hand. As his fingers touched those of Blanche Delaware, to aid her in crossing the rivulet, they clasped upon her hand with a gentle pressure of thanks—so slight that she could not be offended, so defined that she could not mistake. The natural impulse of surprise was to look up; and, before she could recollect herself, she had done so, and her eyes met Burrel's. What she saw was all kind, and gentle, and tender; but she instantly cast down her eyes, with another blush that was painful from its intensity, and with a single tear of agitation—and perhaps delight.

CHAPTER XI.

Sir Sidney Delaware was a peculiar character; and, if I had time, I would go on and make a miniature of him. But I have not time; and therefore, though there might undoubtedly be a great deal of pleasure in investigating all the little complex motives which made him do this thing or that thing, which seemed quite contrary to his general principles—a great deal of pleasure in finding out the small fine lines that connected together actions that appeared as opposite as light and darkness—yet, having a long journey before me, and very little time to spare, I must refrain from taking portraits by the roadside, leaving every pleasant gentleman of my acquaintance to say, "That is not natural—this is out of character!" if he like.

One thing, however, I must notice, which was, that Sir Sidney Delaware was in some degree an indolent man—there was a great deal of the vis inertiæ in his constitution. His mind was naturally active enough, but the body clogged it, and even rendered it lazy too; and the opposition between a keen and powerful moral constitution, and an idle physical temperament, was the cause of many a contradiction in his conduct.

Such had been the case in regard to his daughter's visits to Mrs. Darlington. That good lady, when she first settled in the neighbourhood, had determined upon visiting the people

at the park; and though Sir Sidney for some time continued stiff, and cold, and stern—ay, and even rude—Mrs. Darlington persevered, and Mrs. Darlington carried her point.

The same now became the case with Burrel. He had been once received as an intimate in the house of the Delawares, and the door was open to him whenever he chose. There was something to be said, it is true, upon the score of a great service rendered, which, of course, formed a tie between him and every member of the Delaware family, which existed in no other case. But still there was a great deal of habit in the matter; and Burrel, having now his purpose to carry too, took care that the good custom should not drop.

He became almost a daily visitor. Many a long ramble he took with Captain Delaware; many a sweet intoxicating walk beside Blanche. Many, too, were the long and pleasant discussions he held with Sir Sidney, upon every subject under the sun—the customs and manners of our ancestors—the glorious works of past ages—the stores of classical knowledge, or the beauties and perfections, follies and absurdities, of our own and other lands.

As some French writer has said, "C'est dans les petites choses que l'on temoigne son amitié. L'amour propre a trop de part à ce qu'on fait dans les grandes occasions;" and it is this truth that makes small attentions always pleasant to those who receive them—great services often painful. Burrel felt that it was so; and took infinite care to conceal that he had the slightest thought of relieving Sir Sidney Delaware from his difficulties; but, at the same time, by the display of elegant manners and a polished mind, and by the constant outbreakings of a generous and a noble heart, he rendered himself both so agreeable and so much esteemed that Sir Sidney learned to think, "If I required any great service, I would ask it of Henry Burrel sooner than of any other man I know."

Very soon the worthy baronet began to look for his appearance shortly after breakfast; and, as he had always something—perhaps of little consequence—but still something on which he wished to speak with him, he twice caught himself saying, when Burrel was a few minutes after the usual hour, "I wish Mr. Burrel would come;" and then remembered, with a sort of cynical smile, springing from very mixed feelings, that he had no right to expect that he would come at all.

Burrel always did come, however; and, finding that he was ever made most welcome by the baronet, greeted with a hearty shake of the hand by Captain Delaware, and found a bright, though timid, smile on the sweet lips of Blanche, he

did not find it very difficult to assign motives for his each day's visit, or to discover an excuse for the call of the next morning. Sir Sidney Delaware soon began to give him stronger marks of his esteem; and on more than one occasion, when accidentally alone with Burrel, referred frankly to the state of his own affairs, and the causes which had combined to produce their embarrassment.

Burrel, on his part, of course found the subject difficult to converse upon, and the more so, perhaps, from the previous knowledge, which he did not choose to display. However, when on one occasion the baronet directly mentioned the annuity granted to the Earl of Ashborough, he replied—"But the interest is enormous, and the earl would, of course, suffer you to redeem it."

"I am sorry to say, my young friend," replied Sir Sidney, "that at the time you met William in the coach coming from London, the poor fellow was returning full of disappointment from an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Lord Ashborough to permit the repayment of the original sum. But his lordship refused in the most peremptory manner; and, on the deed being produced, no clause of redemption was found in it, although, in the original letter of instructions for the preparation of that instrument, the introduction of such a clause is expressly enjoined."

"If I might advise, Sir Sidney," replied Burrel; but then breaking off again, he added—"But perhaps I am taking too great a liberty with you, in even offering advice upon your private affairs."

"Not in the least, my dear sir!" replied the baronet. "Speak, speak, my dear sir! I have forgotten all my legal learning, and shall be very glad of any advice upon the subject."

"I know nothing of law, either," answered Burrel, smiling; "but I know a little of Lord Ashborough, and I know the character he bears in the world. Of his faults and failings, I do not pretend to speak; but his lordship has, of course, his share. He has, however, always maintained a grave and dignified name, and high character in society; and it is very generally believed that his lordship values the reputation of a just, stern, upright peer, more than——"

"The reality!" added Sir Sidney Delaware, with one of those sneers which had made him many an enemy in his youth.—Strange that a turn up of the nostrils should make men cut each other's throats!

"I was not going to be quite so severe," said Burrel, somewhat gravely; "but I was going to add, that he values that reputation more than any part of his estate; and I should

think that if your son were to go to London once more, and were to show him the letter of instructions for the preparation of the annuity deed, pointing out to him that the clause has been omitted, either by the mistake or the fraud of a lawyer, and hinting at the publicity of a court of justice—I think, I say—indeed I feel sure, that his lordship's care for his reputation, coming in support of what I believe to be his natural sense of equity, would make him at once accept the redemption."

"Perhaps you are right in regard to his care for his reputation, Mr. Burrel," replied Sir Sidney Delaware. "But I, who know him better perhaps than you do, cannot reckon much upon his sense of equity. I know him well—thoroughly! In early years, before these children were born, Lord Ashborough and myself were unfortunately involved in a dispute, which did not arise in any great demonstration of a sense of equity on his part; and since that time, I have reason to believe that disappointment, added to a bitter quarrel, has caused him to watch an opportunity of treading on the head of one, against whom Time even—the great mollifier of all things—has not been able to abate his rancour."

"I would fain believe that you do not quite do him justice," replied Burrel. "May not a little personal dislike on your own part, my dear sir, influence your mind against him?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Burrel! No, indeed!" answered Sir Sidney Delaware. "I know him. He was, and is, and ever will be, the same man. The cause of our quarrel now lies in the cold forgetful dust, where all such dissensions cease. Besides, I was naturally the least offended of the two, being the injured person. I also was successful—he disappointed—notwithstanding all his arts; and therefore the matter with me was soon forgotten, while with him it has been, I am afraid, long remembered. Nevertheless," he added, "do not for a moment fancy that I am saying all this because I do not intend to follow your advice. Far from it—William shall go up. Indeed, I should think myself very wrong, were I to leave any means untried to remove those embarrassments which shut my children out from the society to which by birth they are entitled."

Captain Delaware soon joined the conference; and, although he shook his head at all idea of changing the determination of Lord Ashborough, yet he undertook to try, with a readiness that the cold and haughty demeanour which he described that nobleman to have maintained towards him, rendered a little extraordinary. The resolution, however, once taken, William Delaware was not a man, either by temperament or habit, to

lose a moment in putting it into execution, and his place was instantly secured in the next morning's coach for London. Burrel agreed to dine at the mansion, and the day passed over with that additional drop of excitement, which renewed hope and expectation, however faint, are still sure to let fall into the cup of life.

Either it was really so, or Burrel fancied it, that Blanche Delaware was more lovely and more fascinating than ever; and, indeed, the feelings that had been growing upon her for several days, had added an indescribable and sparkling charm to all the attractions of youth, and grace, and beauty. The soul always did much in her case to increase the loveliness that nature had bestowed upon her face and form, and Burrel could not help imagining—even long before—that the graceful movement of each elegant limb, and finely-modelled feature, was but the corporeal expression of a bright and generous mind within. But now the heart, too, was called into play, and all the warm and sunny feelings of a young and ardent bosom sparkled irrepressibly up to the surface, calling forth new charms, both in their accidental flash, and in the effort to suppress them.

All Burrel's enthusiasm, too—brought as he was by every circumstance into nearer connection with that fair being, than any other events could possibly have produced—having been admitted to that intimate friendship which no other man shared—having become the friend and adviser of her father and brother, and having saved her own life—all his own natural enthusiasm of character, therefore, unchained by any opposing motive, broke through all the habitual restraints of the state of life to which he had so long been accustomed; and during that afternoon, Henry Burrel, with very little concealment of his feelings, sat beside Blanche Delaware, full of that bright unaccountable thing—love.

The matter was so evident, and indeed had been so evident for the last two or three days, that the eyes of Captain Delaware himself—not very clear upon such subjects—had been fully opened; and now, as Burrel bent over his sister's drawing-frame with a look of tenderness and affection that would bear but one interpretation, he turned his eyes upon his father to see whether it was really possible that he did not perceive the feelings that were kindling up before him.

No one perhaps had ever in his day felt more deep and sincere love than Sir Sidney Delaware; yet—it is wonderful! quite wonderful!—Burrel might almost, as the old romances term it, have died of love at his daughter's feet, without his perceiving that anything was the matter. Burrel was bending over Blanche Delaware with a look, and a tone, and a manner,

that all declared, "Never, in the many mingled scenes which I have trod, did I meet with anything so beautiful, so gentle, so graceful as yourself!" Captain Delaware, as I have said, turned his eyes upon his father; but Sir Sidney, with his fine head a little thrown back, a pair of tortoiseshell spectacles upon his nose, and his face to the bookcases, was walking quietly along, looking earnestly for Pliny.

Oh, had you not forgotten all your lessons in the natural history of the heart, you might have marked much, Sir Sidney Delaware, that would have given you more to study than could be found in Pliny, ay, or Plato either!

"I must look to it myself," thought Captain Delaware. "Poor Blanche! It would not do to have the dear girl's affections trifled with. Yet, I do not think he is one to play such a part either—Oh, no!—yet I must speak to him!"

With this doughty resolution, and a thousand thoughts and difficulties in regard to what he was to say when he did begin, Captain Delaware sat down to dinner, somewhat absent and pensive; and after Blanche had left them, and Sir Sidney had retired to his dressing-room to indulge in a somewhat usual nap after dinner, the gallant officer invited his friend to ramble through the park till tea-time, fully prepared to do a great deal that a man of the world would never have thought of doing at all. Burrel saw that something was weighing upon his companion's mind; but as his own determinations in regard to Blanche were completely formed, and he feared no questions upon the subject, he did not anticipate any. He left Captain Delaware, however, to bring forth his own thoughts at leisure, and walked on by his side as silent as himself, though not quite so much embarrassed.

At length Captain Delaware began—"I have wished," he said, "Mr. Burrel——"

Burrel started, for the epithet 'Mr.' had long been dropped towards him by his companion, and he evidently perceived that something very formal was working its way through his friend's mind.

"I have wished, Burrel," repeated Captain Delaware, correcting himself on seeing the surprise expressed by the other's countenance—"I have wished to speak to you about my sister;" and, as he mentioned that dear name, a sense of deep affection for her made him proceed more boldly, though his face glowed warmly as he spoke. "You have been much with her of late, and perhaps may be so for some time longer. Now—do not misunderstand me, Burrel—do not think I doubt you, or seek to question you: but I wish first to put you in mind that she sees very few persons besides yourself,

and next to tell you—as most men of station and fortune expect to receive some portion with their wives—to tell you that the greater part even of the small sum which Blanche and I inherited from our mother, is engaged to support as far as possible, and that is little enough, our father's station in society."

"And did you, my dear Delaware, suppose for a moment," said Burrel, in reply—"did you imagine from what you have hitherto seen of my conduct and sentiments, that so long as I had enough myself to offer any woman I might love, I would consider her fortune for an instant?"

"No, no! I did not suppose you would," replied Captain Delaware, hesitating in some degree how to proceed. "But the truth is, Burrel, I have heard that women's hearts are delicate things, and as easily wounded as the wing of a butterfly. However, let us say no more of it. I begin to think that I have got out of my depth, and meddled with matters I had better have left to themselves."

For some reason, or reasons—from some simple or complex motive, which I do not know, and shall not stop to discover—men, however fully their minds may be made up in such matters as that on which I write, never like to be questioned upon the subject till they choose to explain themselves; and, although Burrel was fully determined to offer his hand to Blanche Delaware, as soon as he had convinced himself that not a shadow of hesitation on her part would hurt his pride; and though he completely understood Captain Delaware's feelings upon the subject, and was amused at his straightforwardness, yet some internal little devil of perversity made him feel almost offended at the sentences we have just recorded. He resisted, however, and the devil fled from him.

"My dear Delaware," he said, after a moment's pause, which he employed in clearing his bosom of the enemy, "although no man likes to make a declaration, except at his own choice and convenience, yet, situated as you are, I can enter into all your feelings for your sister. Set your mind at rest then," he added, laying his hand frankly and kindly on his companion's arm—"set your mind at rest then, as far as I am concerned. It is my intention, as soon as I can entertain any hope of success, to offer my hand to your sister. If she refuse me, it is not my fault you know; but this much you will, I am sure, take upon my word, that I would not presume for one moment to solicit the hand of a daughter of Sir Sidney Delaware, unless in rank I could aspire to that honour, and in fortune could maintain her in that circle which

she is calculated to adorn. Let us say no more upon the subject, if you can trust me."

Captain Delaware grasped his hand warmly. "You have made me very happy," he said.

"Well, then, keep my secret," added Burrel, with a smile, "and let your sister decide the rest."

William Delaware could well have told, at least he thought so, what his sister's decision would be; but delicacy prevented him from speaking his belief; and with a lightened heart he changed the subject, and returned with Burrel to the mansion.

CHAPTER XII.

William Delaware set out from Emberton, and arrived in London. His next step was to send a note to Lord Ashborough, informing him of his being in town, and requesting an interview the following morning; and in answer he received a very polite, though somewhat formal, billet, inviting him to breakfast in Grosvenor-square, and promising as long an audience after that meal as he might think necessary.

At the appointed hour—for Captain Delaware never considered that appointed hours mean nothing—he approached Lord Ashborough's house, and was ushered upstairs, where he found housemaids and empty drawing-rooms enow; and, planting himself at a window that looked out into the square, he gazed forth with somewhat unpleasant anticipations occupying his mind, and rendering his eye sightless as to all that was passing before it.

In a few minutes the housemaids withdrew from the further rooms, and the whole suite became vacant for some time, till a light step caught Captain Delaware's ear; and, turning round, he beheld a young lady whom he had seen there before, when last he had visited London. At that time he had found her surrounded by a whole bevy of strangers, whose gay appearance and supercilious manner had somewhat repelled the young sailor, although Miss Beauchamp herself, Lord Ashborough's niece, had spoken to him with frank kindness, and claimed relationship with him at once.

Miss Beauchamp now advanced towards him, while he acknowledged her approach by a bow, which was stiff though not awkward. The young lady, however, held out her hand with a gay smile, and, as he took it, added, in a tone of playful sharpness—"Tell me, sir, are you my cousin, or are you not?"

"I believe I have some right to claim that honour," replied Captain Delaware.

"Well, then," continued the young lady, "lay aside, immediately, all that stiff, chilly reserve, or I will disown you henceforth and for ever." Captain Delaware smiled, and she continued—"I know that this house has a very icy atmosphere, but that does not extend to my part of it; and while my noble and stately uncle may be as frigid as the north pole in his peculiar territories—the library and the dining-room—I must have a pleasanter climate in my domains, the drawing-rooms and breakfast-room."

"Your own presence must always produce such an atmosphere," replied Captain Delaware. "But you must remember, Miss Beauchamp, that I have been but a short time within its influence, so that I have scarcely had leisure to get thawed."

"Oh, I must unfreeze you quite, ere long, my good cousin," replied Miss Beauchamp, laughing. "But now, listen to me for five minutes, for I have a great deal more to say to you than you know anything about. Calculating that you would come early, when I heard that my uncle had asked you to breakfast, I determined to rise a full hour sooner than usual, on purpose to give you your lesson for the day."

Captain Delaware expressed his thanks as warmly as possible, acknowledging, however, that his gratitude was somewhat mingled with surprise, to find that his fair cousin was prepared to be interested in behalf of one who, though akin by blood, was nearly a stranger as far as acquaintance went.

"That would be a severe reproach to my forwardness, William Delaware," replied the young lady, "if I had not a good motive 'in petto.' Besides, I find that, in days of yore, when we were all children, and my good father was alive, that you and I and Blanche, and my brother Henry, have had many a rude game of play amongst the old trees of Emberton Park. But let us speak to the point, as we may have little time to speak at all.—An old friend of yours and mine, good Dr. Wilton, has written to me a long letter, two or three days ago, giving me an account of all this unfortunate business between your father and my uncle, and desiring me, if you ever came to town again, to do my best to forward your view. Now, the truth is, I have no more influence with Lord Ashborough than that screen."

"With a thousand thanks for your kind interest," replied Captain Delaware, "I should still be sorry to owe, even to your influence, what I could not obtain from justice."

"Pride! pride!" cried Miss Beauchamp, "the fault of

men and angels! But let me tell you, my dear cousin, that no man or men have any right to be proud in a woman's presence; for ye are a mere race of bullies at the best, and bow like the veriest slaves whenever we choose to tyrannize over you. But to the point. Listen to my sage advice. I was saying that I had no more influence with my Lord Ashborough than that screen. I am a mere piece of household furniture; and I dare say that I am to be found written down in the inventory thus:—'Front drawing-room—Three tables, four-and-twenty chairs, four sofas, three chaises longues, a niece.' I do believe my uncle, when I refused the Honourable Mr. What's-his name, the other day, which mortally offended his lordship, thought of having me transferred to the schedule of fixtures forthwith. But, nevertheless, as I am a hearing and seeing piece of furniture, I have learned that the only way to manage the Earl of Ashborough is to be firm, steady, somewhat haughty, and a good deal stern. Remember all this, my dearly beloved cousin, and make use of the hint. But I hear his lordship's morning step, when the neat boot is first, for that day, fitted on to the neat foot. So I will to the breakfast-room; and do not forget, when you meet me, to wish me good-morrow in set form and civil terms, and take care that you do not look conscious."

Thus saying, the gay girl ran lightly through the long suite of rooms, leaving Captain Delaware standing nearly where she had found him, with a good deal of admiration at her beauty, and a good deal of surprise at the mingling of kindness both with levity and with the slightest possible spice of coquetry, which she had displayed in their brief conversation.

Ere she was well out of sight, the step that had been heard above might be distinguished descending the stairs. There is not a little character in a step, and the sound of Lord Ashborough's was peculiar. Perhaps the enfeebling power of time—which, what with one aid or another, was not very apparent in his person—marked its progress more decidedly in his step than in anything else. There was a certain degree of creaking feebleness in it, especially at an early hour of the morning, when he was just out of bed, which, joined with a slow precision of fall, indicated a declension in the firm and sturdy manhood. His lordship felt it, and in society he covered the slight falling off by an affectation of grave and thoughtful dignity of movement, but his valet-de-chambre knew better.

Captain Delaware, however, did not; and as the Earl entered the room, with a roll of papers in his hand, like Talma in Sylla—he acted a good deal, by the way—his young

relative thought him a very grave and reverend signor; and would rather have lain for an hour alongside an enemy's frigate, yard-arm to yard-arm, than have grappled with so stern and thoughtful a personage, on so disagreeable a business as that which he came to discuss. He had undertaken it resolutely, however, and he was not a man to flinch before any coward apprehensions, moral or physical.

The first expression of his lordship's countenance, when his eyes fell upon his visitor, was not certainly of a nature greatly to encourage him. For a moment—a single instant—nature got the better, and a slight shade of that loathing dislike, with which one regards some poisonous reptile, or the object of some peculiar antipathy, passed over Lord Ashborough's features. It was gone as quickly; and with a much more condescending and agreeable smile than he had bestowed upon him on his former visit, the Earl advanced, and welcomed him to London.

Captain Delaware was of course very well disposed to welcome any show of kindness; and he said a few words in regard to his regret at having to trouble Lord Ashborough again.

"Oh! we will speak of all that after breakfast," said the Earl. "When last I saw you, I was hurried and fretted by a thousand things, and had no opportunity of showing you any attention. Indeed, I have but little leisure now; the duties of my office"—he held a sinecure post, which required him to sign his name twice a-year—"the duties of my office claiming great part of my time. But you must really, as long as you remain in London, spend your days here; and my niece, Maria, who has nothing to do, will show you all over the world, under the fair excuse of your cousinship. But let us to breakfast. Maria will not be down for this hour; but I never wait for that lazy girl."

Lord Ashborough was not a little surprised to find his niece in the breakfast-room, and praised her ironically on her habits of early rising; but Miss Beauchamp answered at once, "Oh! I had a reason for getting up soon to-day, otherwise I should certainly not have done so. To contemplate my dear uncle for an hour, with one foot crossed over the other, letting his coffee get cold, and reading the newspaper, is too great a treat to be indulged in every morning."

"And pray, my fair niece," demanded Lord Ashborough, smiling at a picture of himself which was not without the cold sort of importance he chose to assume; "and pray, my fair niece, what was the particular cause of your infringing your ancient and beloved habits this morning?"

"First and foremost, of course," replied Miss Beauchamp,

with a graceful bend of the head to her cousin, "to see Captain Delaware, whose visit you yesterday evening led me to expect; but, in the next place, my full resolution and determination was to take possession of your lordship during breakfast, and tease you in every sort of way, till you agree to leave this horrid place, London, now that you are positively the last gentleman remaining in it, except the men in red coats that walk up and down St. James's Street, and look disconsolate from June till January. But they are forced to stay, poor fellows! You are not."

"There is no use of going out of town, Maria, to come up again the next day," replied Lord Ashborough. "Parliament will certainly sit for a few days this month, and I must be present. But, in regard to your cousin, I intend to make him over to you for the whole day, as I have some business to transact; and, therefore, you see you would not have been deprived of his visit."

"Sad experience making me doubtful," replied Miss Beauchamp, laughing, "in regard to how far your lordship's civility might extend to your kindred, I did not know whether I might ever see Captain Delaware again."

She spoke in jest, but it cut home; and Lord Ashborough, reddening, took his coffee and the newspaper, and left his cousin and his niece to entertain themselves, while he soon became immersed in the idle gossip of the day. After breakfast, he led the way to the library with renewed complacence, and, begging Captain Delaware to be seated, he listened to him calmly and good-humouredly, while he spoke of the cause of his coming. He then read attentively the first instructions for the annuity deed, and returning the paper, fell —or affected to fall—into deep thought.

"Why, this certainly does make a great difference," he replied at length; "and I am sure, Captain Delaware, you will exculpate me from any desire to take advantage either of an accident or a misfortune. My plan through life has been to do clear and simple justice to all, and never to fall into the absurd error of mingling all the feelings of private life with matters of business. Matters of business should be transacted as matters of business, and without the slightest regard to whether you be my cousin or a perfect stranger. I can be generous when it is necessary, as well as other men; but you applied to me not on a point of generosity, but on a point of right and of justice, and therefore in that light did I consider and decline your last proposal. In the same light do I consider your present statement; but the paper you have produced, according to my present views, so far alters the question, that without returning you any direct

answer at present, I will, in going out, call upon my solicitor, consult with him, and, if you will see him to-morrow at eleven o'clock, he shall tell you my final views, and, depend upon it, they shall be those of substantial justice."

Captain Delaware was somewhat disappointed; for, from the first impression which the production of the paper he had shown Lord Ashborough had made upon that nobleman, he had concluded that the matter would be settled at once. He saw, however, that it would be useless to press the subject further at the time; and, after promising to spend his days, though not his nights, at the house of his noble kinsman, during his stay in London, he left him in possession of the library.

Lord Ashborough almost immediately after mounted his horse, and rode slowly on down all those filthy streets and long, which conduct to Clement's Inn; in one of the dark and dusty staircases of which, stinking of parchment and red tape, he met the identical Mr. Peter Tims, of whom he was in search, and who led him instantly into the penetralia. Their conversation was keen and long, but a few sentences of it will be sufficient here. After relating Captain Delaware's visit, the Earl demanded, eagerly, "Now, Mr. Tims, can the matter be done? Have you seen to it?"

"I have, my lord, and it can be done," replied the lawyer. "I have this morning been at the house of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson. Both partners are out of town, but their head clerk was there, and I have made the following arrangement with him——"

"You have not compromised my name, I hope," interrupted the Earl.

"Not in the least, my lord," replied the other. "I explained to the clerk that you would sell out at this moment to a great disadvantage—that fourteen days would in all probability alter the position of affairs: and that therefore your lordship would give a bill at that date for the ten thousand pounds which you were to pay them for Mr. Beauchamp."

"But how will that forward the matter?" demanded the Earl. "It will seem as if I were shuffling with my nephew concerning his money matters, and not promote the other purpose."

"Your pardon, my lord!" cried the lawyer. "You shall demand of Sir Sidney Delaware to give you bills for the whole sum at a fortnight's date, and give him up the annuity deed at once, and we will arrange it so that you shall be out of town when the draft on you becomes due, so as to stop the ten thousand pounds at the very nick."

"Ay, but Harry will write up to know whether it be paid!" said the Earl.

"I will write to him as soon as you have given the bill, my lord, telling him that the money is paid," answered the lawyer; "and I will direct the letter to his house in John Street, to be forwarded. I have a good excuse for writing, in regard to this business of the valet he kicked down stairs —so there will be no suspicion."

"You know that he is a good man of business, Mr. Tims," replied the Earl, doubtingly. "Do you think he will take your word without writing to inquire?"

"Oh, yes, my lord!" answered the lawyer, boldly. "You know your own plans, and therefore think he may suspect them. That is the way with all gentlemen, when they first do any little business of this kind. They always fancy that other people know that we are wanting to keep them in the dark. Remember, Mr. Beauchamp has no suspicion. He does not know that you know where he is. He is not aware that you have heard he is going to squander away his money at all; still less, that you are good enough to take such pains to prevent him. He will believe it at once, that the money is paid, and will simply give a draft for it on Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson when the money is wanted. Besides, from all I can learn, although he be in general a good man of business enough, I hear he has got hold of one of those pieces of business that put everything else out of a man's head altogether."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the Earl, in a strong tone of aristocratical pride; for there was a sort of sneer upon the countenance of Mr. Tims, which he did not at all admire, coupled with the mention of his rich nephew—and here, be it remarked, that it made a great difference in Lord Ashborough's estimation, whether the person spoken of was a rich or a poor nephew. He had a sort of indescribable loathing towards poverty, or rather towards poor people, which was only increased by their being his relations. He hated poverty—he could not bear it: in his eyes it was a disease—a pestilence—a vice; and therefore—although, had his nephew been poor, Mr. Tims might have sneered at him to all eternity—as he was rich, Lord Ashborough felt very indignant at the least want of reverence towards him. The tone in which he demanded, "What do you mean, sir?" frightened Mr. Tims, who hastened to reply, that he had heard from his respected and respectable relative in the country, that the Mr. Burrel, who had proposed to lend the money to Sir Sidney Delaware, was now continually at Emberton Park; and that it was very well understood in the

country that he was to be married immediately to Miss Delaware.

Lord Ashborough gazed in the face of the lawyer with that mingled look of vacancy and horror which we may picture to ourselves on the countenance of a person suddenly blinded by lightning. When he had collected his senses, it was but to give way to a more violent burst of rage, and with clenched hands and teeth, he stamped about the office of the attorney, till the clerks in the outer room began to think that he was breaking the hard head of their master against the floor. A few words, however, served to give vocal vent to his fury. "The hypocritical, artful, despicable race of beggarly fortune-hunters!" he exclaimed; and turning out of Mr. Tims's office, impelled by the sole impetus of passion, he was standing by his horse almost ere the attorney knew he was gone. The groom held the stirrup tight, and Lord Ashborough had his foot on the iron, when cooler thoughts returned, and, walking back to the chambers, he again entered the lawyer's room.

"Do all that you proposed, Mr. Tims," he said; "get the bills—retard the payment—arrest the old reptile—manage it so that he may not get bail; and the day you lodge him in the King's Bench—if it can be done—you receive a draft for a thousand pounds. They must be crushed, Mr. Tims," he continued, grasping him tight by the arm; "they must be crushed—ground down into the earth—till their very name be forgotten;—but mark me," he added, speaking through his set teeth—"mark me—if you let them escape, my whole agency and business goes to another for ever."

"No fear, my lord!" replied Mr. Tims, in a sharp, secure tone, rubbing his little, fat, red hands, with some degree of glee. "No fear, if your lordship will consent to leave it to my guidance. But I will send for a bill stamp, and we will draw up the bill directly, send it to Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, and then I will give due notice to Mr. Beauchamp that the money is paid—which, indeed, it may be said to be, when your lordship has given your bill for it—you know."

"I care not, sir!" exclaimed Lord Ashborough vehemently, "whether it may be said to be so or not. My nephew must be saved from this cursed entanglement, by any means or all means. I will do my part—see that you do yours. Crush these mean-spirited vipers, somehow or another, and that as soon as may be;—but mind," he added more quietly, "mind, you are to do nothing beyond the law!"

"I will take care to do nothing that the law can take hold of," replied the lawyer. "But you cannot think, my lord, how many things may be done lawfully when they are done

cautiously, which might treat one with a sight of New South Wales, if they were to be undertaken without due consideration—but I will send for the bill, my lord."

The bill was accordingly sent for, drawn, and signed by Lord Ashborough; and the attorney, after having dispatched it to Mr. Beauchamp's solicitor, wrote to that gentleman himself a letter upon the business to which he had referred, while speaking to Lord Ashborough; and in a postscript mentioned that he had handed over to his agents a note for ten thousand pounds, on behalf of Lord Ashborough. That nobleman stood by while all this proceeding was taking place, and marked, with a well-pleased smile, the double language of the lawyer, and the quiet and careless manner in which he contrived to offer a false impression in regard to the payment of the money. When all was concluded, he paced slowly to the vacant park, calmed his disturbed feelings by a quiet ride round its dusty roads, and then returned with renewed self-command, to shower upon William Delaware civilities, in proportion to his increased detestation.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Right Honourable the Earl of Ashborough could think of but one thing; and what between the active working of his own brain, and the unceasing exertion of the pineal gland of Peter Tims, Esq., following keenly the plans and purposes which we have seen them communicating to each other, the scheme for ruining the family at Emberton was brought to that degree of perfection which rendered its success almost certain. Mr. Tims, indeed, did wonder that the noble Earl had forgotten to propose to him any plan for detaining Sir Sidney Delaware in prison after his arrest, and for consummating the persecution so happily begun. He concluded that it had slipped his lordship's memory; but, as he foresaw that, of course, Mr. Beauchamp would immediately come forward to liberate the baronet, and clear him of his embarrassments, Mr. Tims revolved a thousand schemes for entangling him still more deeply, in order to be found prepared as soon as his noble patron should apply to him for assistance on this new occasion.

In truth, however, Lord Ashborough had calculated all; and from what he had formerly known of Sir Sidney Delaware, as well as from what he had lately heard of his impaired constitution, he felt assured that even three or four days of

imprisonment for debt would terminate either life or reason, and thus leave his vengeance and his hatred sated to the full.

There was in the bosom of Lord Ashborough at least so much consciousness, that all this was but a pageant, that he found it necessary to redouble the careful guard he had put upon his feelings towards Captain Delaware; and though he came back to dinner meditating the destruction of his race and family, he showered on the young sailor's head civilities which might have raised doubts had he dealt with one of the suspicious. Captain Delaware, however, was not one of the suspicious. He had not acquired the quality of suspiciousness in any of the three ways by which it reaches the human heart—neither by the consciousness of evil designs in his own breast, by experience of the world's baseness, or by the exhortations of others. He was susceptible indeed, and easily perceived when a slight was intended, or when the least approach to scorn was felt towards him or his; but deeper and blacker feelings escaped his observation, if covered by even a slight disguise. In the present instance he was completely deceived. His drive out with his fair cousin in the morning had proved so delightful, that he began to doubt the efficacy of the water of the Prior's Fountain, and to feel that many such drives might make him either very happy, or very much the contrary. But the kind attention of Lord Ashborough, his changed demeanour, and the hopes to which it gave rise, were all sources of unmixed pleasure. The evening passed away in delight; and when, on visiting Mr. Tims next morning, he found that he was prepared to concede everything that he desired, on the simple formality of his father giving a bill at a few days' date for the money, his satisfaction was complete. Nor was it the less so, that the necessity of awaiting an answer to his letter, communicating these tidings, and of obtaining his father's signature to the bill, obliged him, whether he would or not, to enjoy the society of Maria Beauchamp for at least two days longer.

On the part of that young lady herself no dislike was felt to her cousin's society—every one else was out of town—she had no one with whom she could dance, or flirt, or talk, and still less any one to whom she could communicate any of the deeper and better feelings which formed the warp of her character, and across which the threads of a sparkling sort of levity were intimately woven. With Captain Delaware she did all but the first, and probably she would have danced, too, had minuets still been in vogue. She laughed, she talked, she jested; and there was a sort of simple candour about his nature, together with fine feelings and gentlemanly

habits—preserved, fresh and unadulterated, by a life spent either on the green waters or in the green fields—which altogether wooed forth those points in her own character which, as things most estimable, lay hid in the deeper casket of her heart.

In short, the two days that followed were two very pleasant days indeed; and it was almost with a sigh that Captain Delaware opened his father's letter, which arrived at the end of them, and found the bills duly signed. Mr. Tims had before told him that he had made the money payable at Emberton, in order to save him or his father the trouble of coming or sending again to London. That excuse, therefore, for either prolonging his stay or returning, was not to be had; and, even if it had still been ready, the lawyer also informed him gratuitously, that Lord Ashborough's motive for settling the matter in the manner proposed was in order to spare himself all correspondence in the country, to which he was immediately about to retire for the remainder of the year. The simple fact was, that Mr. Tims—with the same over-anxiety of which he had accused Lord Ashborough, to remove all suspicion of a latent motive—had assigned these causes for his noble patron's conduct, simply to account reasonably for his having demanded a bill for the money, payable at Emberton, instead of following the usual legal routine in such cases—accepting the redemption-money when ready, and then cancelling the deed. But Captain Delaware, with constitutional susceptibility, instantly concluded that the whole was intended as a hint to him that any further intimacy was not desired.

He could not feel indignant, because he felt that he had no right to demand a continuance of the communication which had been accidentally created between himself and the family of his wealthy cousin; but he determined at once to show that there was no necessity for such warnings; and, after having pleaded other engagements, in order to absent himself from his cousin's house during the rest of his stay in London, he took his place in the identical stage which had whirled him down to Emberton on the preceding occasion. He did not, however, in that sort of burning at the heart which people feel on such occasions, neglect to take all those steps which, to the best of his judgment, were necessary to secure his father, and to conclude the business on which he had come to London. On the contrary, he demanded and received, by the hands of Mr. Tims, an acknowledgment on the part of Lord Ashborough, that a promissory note had been given by Sir Sidney Delaware for the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, which, when duly taken up, would be

received as a full and due redemption of the annuity chargeable upon the Emberton estate.

When all this was concluded, and he had eaten in melancholy wise of the dinner which the people of the pseudo hotel at which he lodged set before him, in that den of congregated discomforts, a public coffee-room—when he had done this, and taken an idle walk round the black thing that spits water by table-spoonfuls nearly opposite to Devonshire House, for the purpose of digesting his dinner and his vexation, he could not refrain; but returning home—or rather to the place of his dwelling for the time—he dressed and walked to Grosvenor Square.

Lord Ashborough was in his library; Miss Beauchamp was alone—somewhat in low spirits, too; and looking none the worse for being so. She was in one of those moods in which a man may make a great deal of a woman in a short time—if he knows how; but, unhappily, Captain Delaware did not know how. He talked sentimentally, and she talked sentimentally; and they made tea between them, and poured it out and drank it—but it all came to nothing—otherwise Maria Beauchamp might, perhaps, have been William Delaware's wife before the end of the chapter. Never did a man who was bred and born a sailor miss stays so completely as Captain Delaware did; and just when, towards the close of the evening, he was making up his mind to say something sensible and pertinent, in came Lord Ashborough, and the whole went to the—budget.

Within half an hour after, William Delaware was on his way to his hotel, and in the yellow of the next morning he was once more rolling away, to join the coach for Emberton. His journey was as dull as it well could be. Two quaker ladies occupied one seat, and a deaf man shared the other. Therefore—we shall give one paragraph to Mr. Tims, while Captain Delaware rolls on.

The worthy and beneficent lawyer, full of zeal in the service of his patron, set boldly to work to accomplish the object in view, and added so many thoughtful means and contrivances to support those which we have already seen him propose, that, at the end of eight days, there was hardly a human possibility of his prey escaping him. As, in some instances, he thought fit to prepare engines which went a little beyond the clear limit of the law, he took good care to add a safety valve for himself, by cautiously mingling Lord Ashborough's name with all those particular matters which were most delicate and dangerous, and thus insuring the whole power and influence of that nobleman's rank and fortune to shield him, even if the blame itself did not fall

solely on the Earl. He wrote, too, to his uncle, Mr. Tims, at Ryebury, directing him on no account to advance money to the gentleman calling himself Mr. Burrel, who was, in fact, Lord Ashborough's nephew; and he added many a hint and caution, calculated to make the miser of Ryebury throw every impediment in the way of a liquidation of the debts on Sir Sidney Delaware's estate. At the same time, a vague threat of Lord Ashborough's displeasure, in case of recusancy, was held out; and by the end of the week, Mr. Tims, as we have said, sat down perfectly certain of having drawn those spider toils round the family of Emberton, which it would be impossible for them to evade.

In the meantime, William Delaware arrived at Emberton Park, and found everything precisely as he had left it. Burrel's visits were still continuing daily. Indeed—during his son's absence, which occasioned a sort of gap in the things to which Sir Sidney Delaware was accustomed—the baronet had more than ever sought the presence of Mr. Burrel to supply the want.

The affection of Burrel for Blanche Delaware seemed exactly the same—if anything, there was perhaps an additional shade of tenderness in his manner towards her, which for a moment caused Captain Delaware to believe that his sister had been made acquainted with her lover's feelings. But it was not so. On the contrary, during her brother's stay in London, Blanche had lost many of those pleasant hours which she had before spent in Burrel's society. Her long rambles with him through the park and the neighbouring country were of course at an end for the time; and, although Mrs. Darlington took a house in the immediate vicinity, and pressed Miss Delaware to join her there for a few days—though Blanche, perhaps, might feel that there she could, with propriety, hold freer intercourse with one who had obtained so strong a hold of her affection, yet filial duty overcame even the wish, and she refused to leave her father during her brother's absence.

Captain Delaware's return, therefore, was a matter of joy and delight to every one; and immediately after having heard all those vivâ voce particulars which a letter could not convey, Sir Sidney Delaware visited Mr. Tims, who assured him that the money would be ready full twenty-four hours before the stipulated time, and instantly began to prepare the mortgage which was to secure the sum to the lender. The tidings were, of course, communicated to Blanche, whose young heart beat high, to think of even a part of the dark cloud which had so long overshadowed her dear father's fate, being blown away for ever. If, too, a thought crossed her mind, in

regard to her own situation, and the improvement of her relative position towards him by whom she was beloved, who shall say a word of blame? It was but nature; and perhaps that thought might take away the only thorn that she saw encumbering the fate before her. All eyes sparkled—all hearts beat high at Emberton. The news insensibly was spread abroad—the prospects of the Ruined Family seemed brightening—those to whom they had been kind, even in their adversity, blessed the day that saw their changing fortune—and those who had despised their poverty, began to bow down and worship, now that the storm no longer hung above them.

Sir Sidney Delaware walked with a firmer step. His son felt that one-half of the load of life was gone, and Blanche raised her eyes timidly to meet those of Burrel, as if there had been some secret voice which told her, that—how, or why, she knew not—all the happiness that was growing up around them, was of his planting.

Oh, deceitful Fortune! why wilt thou often smile so sweetly, while opening thy store of evils to pour upon the devoted head!

CHAPTER XIV.

The hours flew as lightly at Emberton Park as if they had plucked all the down from the wings of their good father Time, in order to furnish their own soft pinions; and many of the days which intervened between the signature of the bill for twenty-five thousand pounds, given by Sir Sidney Delaware to Lord Ashborough, and the time when it was to become due, slipped away unnoticed. The worthy baronet suffered them to pass with very great tranquillity, relying perfectly upon the word of Mr. Tims, that the money would be ready at the appointed period. As comfort and happiness, too, are far less loquacious qualities than grief and anxiety, Sir Sidney thought it unnecessary to enter into any further particulars with Burrel, than by merely thanking him, in general terms, for the advice he had given; and by informing him that, in consequence of his son's second journey to London, his affairs were likely to be finally arranged in the course of a month or two. The miser also suffering himself, for a certain time, to be governed by his nephew—who well knew the only two strings which moved him like a puppet, to be avarice and fear—did not attempt to give the young stranger

at Emberton any information of the events which had taken place till long after Captain Delaware's return; and, within five days of the time when the bill became due, Burrel, who had delayed his promised visit to Dr. Wilton till he was almost ashamed to go at all, rode over to his rectory to pass a couple of days with the worthy clergyman, whom he found deep in all the unpleasant duties of his magisterial capacity. William Delaware, also, more active, though less clear-sighted than his father, allowed himself likewise to be deceived by the assurance of Mr. Tims, that the money would be punctually ready; and thus the days might have passed by unheeded by any one, till the very moment that the money was required, had there not been another person concerned, whose views demanded that Burrel's twenty-five thousand pounds should not only be drawn for, but paid into the hands of the miser at Ryebury.

This person, who was far more suspicious, and more on the alert, than any of the party, was no other than Mr. Burrel's silent servant, Harding, who began to grow very uneasy at the delay which was taking place. This uneasiness was increased after his arrival with his master at Dr. Wilton's, inasmuch as, at the very moment of their coming, the worthy clergyman was engaged in investigating some particulars in regard to the fire that had taken place at Mrs. Darlington's, which had given rise to considerable suspicions of some foul play. The first, and perhaps the most important point, appeared to be, that of the whole plate which that worthy lady's house contained, not one ounce was to be found either fused or in its wrought state. In the next place, two or three persons who had first taken the alarm at Emberton, on the night of the fire, and had set out instantly to give assistance, deposed positively to having met a man, to all appearance heavily laden, coming down the hill—which circumstance, considering the time of night, was at least extraordinary. No one, however, could identify this person; but from these facts, as well as from other minor incidents, which it may be unnecessary to mention, it seemed very clear that robbery had been committed during the progress of the fire, if not before.

On their arrival at the rectory, both Burrel and his servant were called upon by Dr. Wilton to state their recollections. Of the evidence given by the first, the worthy clergyman took a private note, but the servant was publicly examined. He gave a clear, calm statement of all that he remembered, mentioned the situation of the room in which he slept, declared that he had been woke by some sounds below, and had shortly

after perceived a strong smell of fire, which increasing, he began to put on his clothes. Finding, however, that the smoke was growing thicker, and that other people in the house seemed alarmed, he had not stayed to clothe himself completely, but had run out; and, seeing that the house was on fire, had proceeded to call his master. Mr. Burrel not moving as fast as he thought prudent, he said, he had left him, and got out of danger as fast as he could.

All this was delivered with amazing coolness and perspicuity; and Dr. Wilton complimented him publicly on the clear and straightforward manner in which he delivered his evidence. Nevertheless, there was something in the whole business, which we—who see into the mechanism of our people's hearts—conceive not to have been pleasing to the silent servant, and he felt it absolutely necessary—according to his own particular notions of benevolence—to remind his master, that the twenty-five thousand pounds which had been left idle, losing the interest all the time, in the hands of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, might soon be necessary to complete the charitable purpose he entertained towards the family at Emberton.

To act remembrancer was not very easy, however, as his habitual silence cut off a great deal of even that small gossip which usually takes place between a man and his valet-de-chambre; but Harding was not a person to be foiled, and what he could not do cunningly he always did boldly.

It was on the second night, then, of their stay at the rectory, that, while undressing his master, he began, after two or three preliminary grunts, "I wished to ask your permission, sir—if you are going to send me to London ——"

"Send you to London!" exclaimed Burrel; "I am not going to send you to London. What put such a thing into your head?"

"Oh, I beg pardon, sir; I did not mean to offend!" replied Harding. "But when you first sent me to Mr. Tims at Ryebury, he asked me a great many questions about you, and told me that you were going to pay off the incumbrances upon Sir Sidney Delaware's estate."

"Which, I suppose, you have been good enough to spread throughout the village?" said Burrel, not a little angry.

"I have never opened my mouth upon the subject, sir, to a living creature—upon my honour!" replied the man, with a solemnity of asseveration that was very suspicious.

"And pray, how is all this connected with your going to London, Harding?" demanded his master.

"Why, only, sir, as I hear the money is to be paid in three

days, and you did not speak of going up yourself, I thought you might be going to send me for the sum," was the cool and self-complacent reply of the worthy domestic.

"To be paid in three days!" exclaimed Burrel. "There must be some mistake in that, surely?"

"Oh no, sir, I can assure you!" replied the man, earnestly. "The last time I was up at the park, when I brought the horses to come over here, I heard the Captain saying so to Miss Delaware—and he said, that he hoped that Tims would have the money ready, or it would be a sad affair."

"Indeed!" said Burrel; "this must be looked to. But you misunderstood your situation, Harding. You are a person very trustworthy, I have no doubt; but I never send my servants for such sums as that you mention, especially when they have not been with me three months. So now, you may go—and when I want to send you to London, or elsewhere, I shall be sure to inform you."

The servant accordingly retired, with a mortified and somewhat dogged air; but, although he had not been entirely without hopes that his master might indeed dispatch him for the money, yet his purpose was sufficiently answered, to prevent his feeling deeply the disappointment of expectations that had never been very sanguine.

The tidings Burrel had heard annoyed him considerably; for although a doubt never crossed his mind in regard to the payment of the money having been made by Lord Ashborough, it seemed so extraordinary that Mr. Tims had not made him acquainted with the day of payment, that a vague suspicion of something being wrong obtruded itself upon his imagination, and kept him for some time from sleep.

"Which is my nearest way to a house called Ryebury, my dear sir?" was one of Burrel's first questions to Dr. Wilton at the breakfast-table next morning. "It belongs to an old miserly money-lender, named Tims."

"The way to the money-lender's, like all those that lead to destruction, is wide enough," replied Dr. Wilton. But I hope, my dear Harry, you are not going to borrow money?"

"No, my dear sir!" answered Burrel, laughing. "Heaven knows what I should do with it, if I did. Within the last six years, I am sorry and ashamed to say, I have accumulated nearly five-and-twenty thousand pounds."

"Fie, fie, that is almost as bad!" cried Dr. Wilton. "I would never advise any man to live quite up to his income, for if he set out with such a determination, he will most certainly live beyond it; but I would recommend every man who has enough for himself and for those who may come

after him, to spend very nearly his whole income. We are but stewards, my dear Harry! we are but stewards! and we are bound to dispense the good things that are entrusted to us."

"And yet I have both heard you cry out against luxury," replied Burrel, "and declared that indiscriminate gifts of money did more harm than good."

"True, true!" replied Dr. Wilton. "I have done all that you say. But there are thousands of eligible ways in this world by which a man may discharge that duty to society imposed upon him by a large fortune, without injuring his own mind, or enervating his own body by luxury. How much may be done to promote the instruction of youth, to furnish employment for the poor and industrious, to encourage arts and sciences, to reward the manufacturer even for his toil and skill, and the merchant for his risk and enterprise, without being the least luxurious in one's own person! Ximenes walked through halls tapestried with purple and gold, and yet lay down upon a bed of straw. Fie, Harry, fie. It is a shame for any rich man to accumulate more wealth while there is a poor man in all the land."

Burrel smiled at the lecture of his old tutor; not indeed because he undervalued his precepts, but because he evidently saw that the lapse of ten years had been skipped over in the good doctor's mind, and that he himself stood there as much the pupil in the eyes of Dr. Wilton, as ever he had been in his days of boyhood.

"Well, well, my dear sir!" he answered; "as some compensation for my negligence hitherto, I think I shall find a means of spending this twenty-five thousand pounds in such a manner as even your severe philosophy will approve."

"Ah, Harry! I see you are laughing at your old pedagogue," said his friend. "But never mind; if worthy Dominie Sampson—a character I revere and love—boasted of having taught little Harry Bertram the rudiments of erudition, I will boast of having taught you, Harry Burrel, the rudiments of virtue—so, mind what you do; for every action you perform is my pride or my shame."

"Then I will try to make you a proud man," replied Burrel. "But I must now leave you, my dear sir, and seek this money-lender, if you will direct me thither."

"Well, whatever be your purpose, take care what you are about with him," answered the doctor. "He is a wily knave. But I shall see you again, ere you leave the country—which, if I judge right, will not be soon"—and he fixed a gay glance upon Burrel's face, which fully repaid the smile he had remarked—"remember, Harry," he added, "I am to speak the blessing."

Burrel laughed, and shook Dr. Wilton's hand, and the worthy rector conducted him to the door, at which his horse stood prepared, pointed out the direct road to Ryebury, which lay straight across the country, at about six or seven miles' distance.

Harding, at the same time, received orders to convey the little baggage he had brought with him back to Emberton, and, that personage internally congratulating himself with the words, "All is right!" as he heard Dr. Wilton direct his master on the road to the miser's dwelling, proceeded calmly to lay out his plans for that which he considered as his 'coup de maître.'

Burrel had no difficulty in finding his way; and at about eleven o'clock he was standing before Mr. Tims's slate-coloured door, enduring the reconnoisance which master and maid always inflicted on those who visited their dwelling. At length Sally appeared, and Mr. Burrel was ushered into Mr. Tims's parlour, where the miser received him with as much cordiality as was in his nature, having from one accidental circumstance acquired a particular regard for his present visitor—a fact in natural history which perhaps requires some explanation.

The simple truth, then, was merely this. On Burrel's first visit, the miser, knowing him to be a man of large fortune, whom it might be well to conciliate, had offered him a glass of ale; and then even went the length of offering a glass of wine. Doing it—like most generous people—with fear and trembling lest it should be accepted, he was inexpressibly relieved by Burrel's declining both the expensive kinds of refreshments that he offered. The matter sunk deep into his mind, and at once created a fund of esteem and gratitude towards the self-denying stranger, which was only augmented by the consciousness that he himself always ate and drank that which was offered to him at other houses, looking upon it all as a saving.

On the present occasion, as soon as Burrel entered, he again made the offer of the ale, and would fain have offered the wine also—but there was something within him which this time rendered it impossible. So much was he of opinion, that the wine is the best which is drank at other people's expense, that he could not believe it possible that Burrel would refuse it twice. While this struggle was going on in his bosom, however, Burrel, who saw that he was somewhat agitated, and never took into consideration the important question regarding the glass of wine, imagined that Mr. Tims felt ashamed of not having given him intimation of

the state of Sir Sidney Delaware's affairs, and proceeded to speak of them at once.

"You have done wrong, my good sir!" he said, "in not letting me know that the money required for redeeming the annuity is to be produced so soon. You did not consider that a day or two's notice may be necessary in transactions to such an amount. However, it so luckily happens that the money is ready!"

"But, my dear sir!" cried Mr. Tims, "how could I give you notice when you were out of the way? I called upon you twice, at no small expense of shoe-leather."

Such indeed was the fact—that is to say, that he had called; and as the internal economy of Mr. Tims's heart is not unworthy of investigation, as a curious piece of hydraulic machinery, it may be well to state what were the contending feelings which made the miser, at last, act contrary to the directions of his dearly-beloved nephew. In the first place, then, it would appear that, in regard to the arrangements for the redemption of the annuity, a liberal commission had been ensured to him on the completion of the transaction, and consequently he was a party interested. The injunctions, therefore, of his nephew to throw every quiet impediment in the way, to keep Mr. Burrel in ignorance of the facts, and, if anything should retard the remittances which that gentleman expected, to refuse all assistance, were clearly contrary to the general principles on which Mr. Tims acted, namely, direct views of self-interest. To correct all this, Lord Ashborough's lawyer had held out the prospect of his patron's friendship on the one hand, and his wrath on the other, and had added many vague promises of more golden rewards, to be procured by his nepotal influence. But Mr. Peter Tims, although he had very little family affection himself, forgot that his uncle possessed as little; and though the only tie between Mr. Tims, senior, and the rest of the world, existed in his nephew's person, yet the miser of Ryebury felt that he could never be without friends or relations as long as there were pounds, shillings, and pence in the world. Mr. Tims, junior, forgot all this, and forgot, too, that his uncle would be, perhaps, less inclined to receive vague promises of compensation as current coin from him than from any other individual; and, at the same time, in order to show him how deeply Lord Ashborough was interested, and how much it would behove him to reward the conduct he pointed out, the lawyer committed the egregious blunder of letting the miser know who the pretended Mr. Burrel really was.

The desire of making his own bargain instantly seized upon

Mr. Tims of Ryebury, and he at once wrote to Mr. Tims of Clement's Inn, with a puzzling question, as to what was to be the specific *consideration* for acting in the manner prescribed. The reply was not so definite as he liked, and he immediately called at Mr. Burrel's lodgings to inform him of the time appointed for the payment of the redemption money. His calculations at the same time were partly true, and partly incorrect, in regard to the probable advantages to be gained by courting Burrel. No man ever did, or evil will, make a correct calculation where self is one of the units. He is sure, by adding a cipher to it, to multiply it by ten, in every shape and way, and thus throw the whole computation wrong together. Mr. Burrel, or rather Mr. Beauchamp, was heir to Lord Ashborough's title and estates, and likely to outlive him by forty years; and therefore, thought Mr. Tims, is likely to patronise me a thousandfold more than Lord Ashborough can. But Mr. Tims forgot that if Henry Beauchamp was likely to outlive Lord Ashborough, Lord Ashborough was fully as likely to outlive Mr. Tims.

These considerations, however, gave the miser a great leaning towards Mr. Burrel in the whole business, though he was not without some speculations in regard to catching all that he could from both parties, if a way were to present itself. At present, he assured his visitor that he had called upon him twice for the express purpose of communicating with him on the subject of Sir Sidney Delaware's affairs; but that, not having found him at home, he did not think fit to leave any message, on so momentous a subject, with either the woman of the house or the groom, who were the only personages he saw.

"Well, sir," replied Burrel, "the question now before us is simply, how we are now to proceed? Must I go to London to receive this money, and bring it down?"

"Why, I should think that would be an expensive way, sir," replied the miser. "Forty shillings going and forty shillings coming, and eighteenpence to the coachman each way, makes four pound three; and then you may well calculate three shillings more for food and extras, going and coming, making four pounds six. Then you would not like to carry such a sum about you; so that you would be obliged to do it by draft, therefore the stamp would not be saved; and I am always for saving the money of my clients—it is the duty of an honest man. No, no, sir! I think you had better draw a letter of credit in my favour, on your agents, and I will direct them to lodge the money in the hands of the London correspondents of our county bank, of which I am one of the poorest proprietors. I will give you an acknow-

ledgment in form for the letter of credit, which, being duly satisfied, I will give you a receipt in full, with a lien upon the mortgage from Sir Sidney Delaware, as I settled before with Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson."

"But can all this be done in time, Mr. Tims?" demanded Burrel.

"Oh, no fear," replied the miser. "This is but the twenty-first. We can get the letter off to-day. The bills given by Sir Sidney do not come due till the twenty-fourth; and we can easily have notice of the money being lodged by the twenty-third in the afternoon, when the post comes in."

Burrel mused a moment. He saw no objection; but yet he thought it might be safer to go himself. He mused again; but then he thought of Blanche Delaware, and that he had not seen her for two whole days—that settled the matter in his mind. There could be no possible obstacle, he persuaded himself, in London—therefore, neither pleasure nor necessity called him thither: one of those two great motives chained him to Emberton, and therefore he determined to stay.

The miser agreed immediately to join him at his lodgings in the little town, where all that was necessary for completing the business was to be procured more easily. Burrel rode off; Mr. Tims reached Emberton in half an hour; the letter was drawn; another written by Mr. Tims to his London bankers; the whole were put in the post; and Burrel, after dining alone, sauntered slowly and happily up the park, to take his tea in the little octagon parlour of Emberton house.

He was received with those sparkling eyes which left no doubt that he was welcome; the next day also passed in happiness; and Burrel, somewhat too sure perhaps of success, fixed in his own mind, as he strolled homeward, that the morning which saw Sir Sidney Delaware freed from a part of his difficulties by his exertions, should also see the declaration of his love to her who had inspired it.

CHAPTER XV.

On the twenty-third day of September, Sir Sidney Delaware had some slight symptoms of a fit of gout, which rendered him somewhat irritable and anxious. Three times did he give particular directions, that, when Mr. Tims of Ryebury came, he was to be shown into the library, and, as often, when he heard any unusual sound in the mansion, usually so still and tranquil, he demanded whether Mr. Tims had arrived. Still

Mr. Tims did not make his appearance, though about two o'clock Mr. Burrel did; and the worthy baronet, in convert sation with his young friend, forgot his anxiety for a time. At length, however, it began to resume its ascendancy, and its first struggle was of course with politeness. He was evidently uneasy; he moved to and fro in his chair; he complained of some pain; and, at length, was in the very act of desiring his son to take a walk, and see why Mr. Tims had not kept his promise, when the daily bag arrived from the post, and—together with a billet or two, apparently from some female friends, for Miss Delaware, which she carried away to her own room; and a letter for Captain Delaware—appeared a lawyer-like epistle, addressed to Sir Sidney, and bearing the London post-mark.

"I will go to Mr. Tims as soon as I have looked over this letter, sir," said Captain Delaware; but Sir Sidney at the same moment opened his own, and, after he had read, he exclaimed, "No, no, William, there is no necessity! You and Blanche were going to walk with Mr. Burrel; and here Lord Ashborough's lawyer tells me that he cannot be down on the precise day—that is, to-morrow—but will come the day after, or the day after that, with a thousand apologies for not coming. If I be well enough, I will go to this person, Tims, myself, to-morrow. If not, you can go. So call Blanche, and take your ramble while it is fine. The clouds are beginning to gather."

Captain Delaware went to seek his sister, who, as we have said, had retired to her own apartment; but he soon returned, saying that she had a slight headache, and would stay at home. He would show Burrel the way himself, he added, to what the people called the Sea Hill, so named because the sea was thence first visible; and, though the spirit of their proposed expedition had all evaporated, Burrel did not choose to decline. "If she did but know!" he thought—"if she did but know what is going on here in my heart, I do not think a slight headache would keep her at home! But I must bring this matter to some certainty—it is growing painful!" and more than one-half of his walk passed in silent musing.

On his return, he went into the library with Captain Delaware. Blanche was there with her father, but she was deadly pale, and Burrel felt more than anxious—alarmed. As soon almost as he entered, Sir Sidney Delaware pressed him to stay to dinner, and Burrel, who had often declined, mastered by strong anxiety, agreed to do so on the present occasion; though, as the invitation was given and accepted, he saw a passing blush, and then a relapse to snowy paleness, come over the countenance of her he loved.

The evening was no longer one of joy. Burrel hoped that some opportunity would present itself of gaining a single moment of private conversation with Blanche Delaware in the course of his stay; but it was evident that she avoided everything of the kind, and, at an early hour, complaining of increased headache, she retired once more to her room. Soon after, her lover took his leave, and returned home in a state of feverish anxiety, difficult to be described; while Captain Delaware perceived that something had gone wrong, but could not divine what; and Sir Sidney, without seeing anything deeper, felt that the evening which had just passed to its predecessors, was the dullest he had spent since he had become acquainted with Henry Burrel.

To Burrel the night went by in sleepless restlessness; and, though we would fain see how it flew with Blanche Delaware, we must take up her story in the course of the morning after, when, rising as pale as the night before, she found that the hour, instead of nine—which she had fancied it must be at least—was only seven. Putting on her bonnet, she glided down the old stone staircase, and proceeded into the park; but it was not towards Emberton that she took her way. On the contrary, turning her steps through the wild woodlands that lay at the back of the mansion, she trod very nearly the same path which she had pursued with Henry Burrel during the first days of their acquaintance.

She traced the walk by the bank of the stream. The kingfishers were flitting over the bosom of the river; the waters were pouring on, fretting at the same pebbles, dashing over the same little falls, lying quiet in the same still pools, as when she had last seen them. But the feelings of her heart were changed, and the light, which nature had then borrowed from joy, was now all overshadowed by the clouds of care. As she gazed upon the stream, and the wild banks, and the hawthorn dingles round her, and felt that a bitter change in her own bosom had stripped them of all their beauties, as ruthlessly as the hand of winter itself could have done, the pain was too much, and she wept.

Still she trod her way onward, pondering slowly and gloomily, till she came so near the little glen that had terminated that happy walk with Burrel, that she could not refrain from going on. A few minutes brought her to the spot where the Prior's Well was first visible, and a few minutes more found her standing under the rich carved canopy of grey stone that covered over the fountain.

For several moments she gazed wistfully and mournfully upon the waters, as, with a calm unobtrusive ripple, and a low whispering murmur, they welled from the basin of the foun-

tain, and trickled through the grass and pebbles. "Oh, would to Heaven!" she thought, "that yon calm water did really possess the mysterious power the old legends attribute to it. But two days since, nothing on earth would have made me taste it, though I believed not a word; and now I am almost tempted to drink, though I still believe as little."

As she thought thus, she stretched out her hand to the little iron cup; and, after a short pause, filled it, and gazed upon the water, as it lay pure and clear, with that peculiar cold sparkling limpidity which the old monks so greatly prized in their wells. Her hand shook a little; but, after a single instant's consideration, with a smile which was mingled of sadness and of a sort of gentle scorn, at the drop of credulity that still lay at the bottom of her heart, she was raising the cup to her lips when a hand was laid gently upon her arm.

She started, but without dropping the cup, and, turning round, she saw beside her, Henry Burrel. Pouring the water carefully back into the font, as if every drop were precious, she let go the chain, while, with downcast eyes, and a cheek burning like crimson, she uttered a scarcely audible good-morrow, in answer to some words that she had hardly heard.

Burrel's hand still rested on her arm, while his eyes were fixed upon her face, tenderly, but reproachfully. The action and the look were those of intimacy, but not of presumption; and, indeed, there had been of late a kind of mute language established between Blanche and her lover, in which many a question had been asked, and many a feeling had been acknowledged, which would have expired in shame had words been the only means of expression, and which gave Burrel some right to inquire into the change he could not but perceive too plainly.

"You were about to drink, Miss Delaware!" he said. "But if you taste of the enchanted fountain, I must drink also; for Heaven knows, then, I shall have more need of the waters of oblivion than you have!"

He spoke with a smile; but there are smiles in the world more melancholy than a world of sighs; and his was so full of pain, anxiety, and disappointment, that Blanche, as she turned away, made the only answer in her power—by tears. The drops from her eyes fell thick, and as her left hand rested on the little carved border of the stone font, over which her head still hung, partially averted to hide the deep and varying feelings that passed across her face, the tears dimpled the clear still waters; and though Burrel, as he stood, could not see her eyes, he perceived that she was weeping bitterly. His fingers, which had rested lightly on her arm to prevent

her from drinking the water, now glided down and circled round her hand, clasping upon it with a degree of gentle firmness.

"Miss Delaware," he said, "for Heaven's sake, tell me, have my hopes been all in vain?—Have I, like a presumptuous fool, dreamed of happiness far greater than I deserve to possess? And do you now, by the striking change which your demeanour towards me has undergone, intend to rebuke my boldness in fancying that you might ever become mine; and to crush the hopes which your former kindness inspired?"

Blanche Delaware wept, but she answered not a word; and Burrel gazed on her for a moment in silence, in a state of agitation which might have well prevented him from judging sanely of what was passing in her mind, even had it been expressed by more unequivocal signs than the bitter though silent tears that rolled over her cheeks.

"For God's sake, speak!" he exclaimed at length. "Oh, Blanche! if you did but know the agony you are inflicting on a heart that loves you better than any other earthly thing, you would at least save me the torment of suspense—may I—dare I—hope that you will be mine?"

Blanche Delaware passed her hand across her brow, and brushed back the rich long ringlets, that, as she stooped, had fallen partially over her eyes. She turned towards her lover also, still grasping the edge of the fountain with her left hand for support, and, with something between a gasp and a sob, replied to his question at once—"No, Mr. Burrel! No! You must not hope! —— Oh, forgive me!"—she added, seeing the deadly paleness that spread over his countenance. "Forgive me! Forgive me! But for your sake—for your own sake—for both our sakes, it is better said at once—I must not—I cannot——"

The rest died upon her lips. Enough, however, had been spoken to make the rejection decisive; and yet it was spoken in such a tone as to betray deep grief as well as agitation on her own part; and to awaken, not suspicions, but a thousand vague and whirling fancies in Burrel's brain.

"And will not Miss Delaware," he said, at length, "at least console me for broken hopes, and the first love of my heart crushed for ever, by assigning some cause for this change in her opinion of one who is unconscious of having done anything to offend or pain her?"

Blanche was again silent, and turned away her head, while the sighs came thick and deep, and the tears were evidently falling fast. Burrel paused for a moment, and then added, in a sad but kindly tone,—"Or is it, Miss Delaware, that I have

imagined a heart free, that was before engaged? Perhaps, long ere I knew you, some more fortunate person may have created an interest which can be inspired but once; perhaps, even, circumstances may have prevented you from rendering him as happy as you might otherwise have done. Oh, tell me, is it so? For though all men are selfish, I should find it easy to gratify my selfishness in contributing to your happiness. I have interest—I have power; and if I could render Blanche Delaware happy with one that she loves, it would be the next blessing to possessing her hand myself. Tell me, Miss Delaware, I beseech you, is it as I imagine?"

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried Blanche, turning her glowing face towards him. "No, upon my word, I never saw the man that I could love but——"

The deepening blush and the fresh burst of tears concluded the sentence as Burrel's heart could have desired; and again laying his hand upon hers, he besought her to tell him what then was the obstacle. But Blanche drew back—not offended, but sad and determined.

"It is in vain, Mr. Burrel," she said; "and I am bound to tell you so at once. My mind is made up—my resolution is taken. You have my highest esteem, my deepest gratitude, my most sincere regard, but you cannot have——"

She paused at the word love; for no circumstances, to the mind of Blanche Delaware, could palliate a falsehood, and she felt too bitterly that he did possess her love also. She changed the phrase in the midst, and added, "I can never give you my hand."

One only glance at the countenance of her lover made her feel that she could bear no more, and that it were better for them both to part at once. She drew back a single step, and then, with a look of painful earnestness, while her hand unconsciously was laid upon his arm, she said, in a low, sad tone, "Forgive me, Mr. Burrel! Oh, forgive me!" and the next moment Burrel was standing alone by the side of the fountain.

He remained there for several minutes, with every painful feeling that it is possible to imagine struggling together in his bosom. First, there was the disappointment of hopes that he had encouraged to a pitch of which he had had no notion, till they were done away for ever; the breaking of a thousand sweet dreams, the vanishing of a crowd of happy images, the dissolution of all the fairy fabric which the enchanter Fancy builds up round the cradle of young affection. Then there were the doubts, the fears, the jealousies, the vague and sombre imaginings, to which the unexplained and extraordi-

nary conduct of her that he loved gave rise; and then, again, was the rankling sting of mortified pride, shooting its venom into the wound inflicted by disappointment.

Burrel paused by the fountain, and suffered every painful thought to work its will upon his heart in turn; and, oh, what he would have given to have wept like a woman—but he could not. At length, steeling himself with that bitter fortitude which is akin to despair, he turned his steps towards the little town. He avoided, of course, the mansion; and, though he gazed at it for a moment with a bent brow and quivering lip, when he caught a sight of it from a distance, yet, as soon as he withdrew his eyes, the sight only seemed to accelerate his pace.

"Have my horse at the door in a quarter of an hour!" were the first words he addressed to his servant, as he entered the house; "and be ready to take up the baggage to London by the coach."

Harding gazed upon his master in horror and astonishment; for the newly-proposed arrangement did not at all coincide with his views and purposes. But Burrel, having given his orders in a tone that left no room for reply, walked on into the little parlour: and it was several minutes before his worthy valet could so far recover from the shock as to find an excuse for evading the execution of his commands. He soon, however, summoned sufficient obstacles to his aid; and, having proceeded to order his master's horse, he returned and entered the parlour uncalled.

"I have ordered the groom to bring up Martindale, sir," he said, "because the bay needs shoeing. But I am afraid, sir, I cannot get all the things ready for the coach. There is everything to pack, sir, and all the bills to be paid, and not above three-quarters of an hour to do it in."

Burrel had been gazing forth from the window, seeing nothing upon earth; but his habitual command over himself was too powerful to suffer him to get deaf as well as blind, under any disappointment; and he turned immediately that the servant spoke. "I orgot," he said, taking out his pocket-book—"you must go up to-morrow morning. There is money to pay the bills;" and he noted down as carefully as usual the sum he gave, adding, "I shall sleep to-night at Dr. Wilton's, and shall be in town on Saturday. Have the travelling chariot taken to Holditch, to be put in order, as soon as you arrive. Call in all my bills in London; and get things arranged to set off for the continent in the course of next week."

The man bowed low, with his usual silent gravity; in a

few minutes more the horse was at the door, and Burrel, riding slowly out of the town, took the road towards the house of his former tutor.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Hush, Master William! hush!" cried the old housekeeper, who, having lived from ancient and better days in the family at Emberton, could never forget that William Delaware had been once a boy, nor ever remember that he was now a man. "Hush, Master William! Miss Blanche is not well, poor dear—not well at all; and, indeed, I think——But there he goes!" and as she spoke, Captain Delaware, who had been calling loudly to his sister to come down and make breakfast for him, as he was in haste, hurried into the breakfast-parlour to perform that office for himself. It was not, indeed, that William Delaware was in the least indifferent to his sister's health or happiness, but he possessed that sort of constitution which hardly permits one to understand what sickness is; and although, had he known that Blanche was suffering under aught that he could assuage, or even sympathise with, he would have hastened to offer comfort and consolation, with every feeling of fraternal affection; he now only muttered to himself, "Oh, she has got one of those cursed headaches!" and proceeded to spoon the tea into the tea-pot, as if he had been baling a leaky boat. "Blanche has got a headache, and is not coming down," he added, as Sir Sidney Delaware entered; "and I have made tea, because I wish to reach Ryebury, and speak with the old miser before he goes out. The fellow must be shuffling."

Sir Sidney expressed his anxiety at the continuance of Blanche's headache, more strongly than his son had done. His eyes had been less quick than those of Captain Delaware, in seeing the growing love between Burrel and his daughter, for such feelings had long before passed away from his own bosom; but his personal experience of sickness had taught him to sympathise with it far more than his son could do, and he was about to visit Blanche's chamber immediately, had not the business of Mr. Tims first attracted him for a moment, and then detained him till breakfast was over, and his son was about to depart.

With manifold directions to express surprise at the miser's want of punctuality, Captain Delaware was dismissed by his father, and took the way direct to Ryebury, fully determined

to enforce Sir Sidney's rebuke, with many more indignant expressions. "Here," he thought, "my father might have been pressed severely by this time—insulted—nay, even arrested—because this scoundrel has not thought fit to produce the money—doubtless, keeping it to get the additional interest of a single day. If it were not for creating new obstacles, I would horsewhip him for his pains!"

It so happened, however—unfortunately enough—that while in the very height of his indignation at Mr. Tims, with that personage's evil deeds and qualities—real and imaginary—past, present, or future—all red-hot and hissing in his mind, who should he encounter but the miser himself, with his sharp red nose turned towards Emberton, and his hands behind his back. Mr. Tims saw him instantly; and as there were various questions which he was anxious to have settled and resolved before he entered into any discussion with either Sir Sidney or his son, he thought that he might escape by a side-path, which opportunely lay just at his left hand; and, consequently, making a rotatory movement on his right heel, he was turning in amongst the bushes, when he was arrested by the voice of the young officer, addressing him in not the most placable tones in the world. As Mr. Tims was well aware that amongst the 'stadiod romoi' he could not compete with so young an opponent as Captain Delaware, he instantly turned and met that gentleman, whose previous wrath was not a little heightened by this evident attempt at evasion.

The most difficult thing for a man who has been secretly coaxing his own anger, is to begin to give it vent without appearing unreasonable; and Mr. Tims's countenance was so cold, dry, and calm, that nothing could be made out of the "Good morning, Captain Delaware!" with which he opened the conversation.

"I thought, sir, that by making my visit so early, I should have found you at home," was Captain Delaware's brief rejoinder.

"Business called me abroad," replied Mr. Tims, as laconically.

"Were you going towards Emberton Park?" demanded the young officer.

"No, sir, I was not!" answered Mr. Tims, whose manner towards the son of "poor Sir Sidney Delaware" was always very different from that which he assumed to rich Mr. Burrel, and was peculiarly simple on the present occasion.

"You were not!" cried Captain Delaware; "then, let me tell you, sir, you should have been there yesterday. I beg to know, sir, why you were not to the time you yourself appointed

for the signature of the mortgage, and the payment of the money advanced."

"Because it was not convenient, sir, and because the money was not ready," replied Mr. Tims, with imperturbable calmness.

Captain Delaware's command over himself abandoned him; and, raising the whip he had in hand, he shook it over the miser's head, exclaiming, "Not convenient! Not ready! By Heaven, if it were not for your years, I would make you find it convenient to keep your word when you have pledged it, and to be ready at the time you promise!"

He was dropping the whip, though his eyes were still flashing, when a voice close beside him, proceeding from an honest neighbouring farmer, whose approach he had not observed, exclaimed, "Captain! Captain! Don't ye strike the old man! Don't ye, now! Don't ye! Oh, that's right, now—reason it with him, like—but don't ye strike him!"

"No, no, Ritson, I am not going to strike him!" replied Captain Delaware. "Go on, my good fellow, and leave us—I will not strike him!"

"Well, well, Captain," said the farmer, laughing, "I'll go—but your word's given, mind. So, don't ye strike the old man, though he were the devil himself,—he looks more like a wet hen under a penthouse, howsomever."

The farmer's description was not far from correct; for Mr. Tims—who had expected no such fierce explosion as that which his words had occasioned, and had fancied he could be insolent in security—now stood aghast, as the rhetoric of Captain Delaware's horsewhip seemed likely to be applied to his shoulders. His knees acquired an additional bend, his nether jaw dropped, his arms hung distant from his sides, his cheeks grew paler, and his red nose stood out in prominent relief, under the very act of fear. The good farmer's interposition, however, calmed him sufficiently to enable his tongue to falter forth some words of apology, declaring that he did not intend to offend Captain Delaware—far from it; but how could that gentleman expect him to speak boldly upon such subjects, out in the public high-road? Who could tell, he demanded, that there might not be robbers in the immediate neighbourhood of the place where they then stood?

"Well, if that be all," answered Captain Delaware, "I will protect you against robbers, till you get to your own house; and there you will be sufficiently at ease to give me a proper explanation of your unaccountable conduct."

Mr. Tims would fain have evaded this immediate consummation; as his purpose in walking to Emberton was to see Mr. Burrel, and ascertain exactly which way would be the

most advantageous for him to act; but Captain Delaware was peremptory; the mediating farmer had walked up the lane, and Mr. Tims was obliged to turn his steps homeward. When he had entered the house, and led his unwelcome visitor into his little parlour, carefully closed the door, and listened to hear that the steps of even his faithful dirty Sally no longer haunted the passage, he began his explanation in a low tone.

"As you say, Captain Delaware, indeed," he went on—"it is a most unfortunate circumstance; but how can I help it? I depended upon another for the money—the letter of credit that he gave for the sum was duly presented; but it appears that a bill for ten thousand pounds, which he expected to be paid by this time, had been dishonoured, and that his agents had not sufficient assets to meet the demand. But as you say, sir, it was impossible that I could help it."

Captain Delaware sat for a moment in silent but bitter disappointment. At length he exclaimed, "And who the devil is this gentleman, from whom you were to receive this money?"

Mr. Tims hesitated. "Why, as to that, Captain Delaware," he said, "I was expressly forbidden to tell; but since the matter has come to this pass, I dare say there can be no harm in it. He is no one else than the gentleman calling himself Mr. Burrel, or, in other words, your cousin, Mr. Henry Beauchamp."

William Delaware started off his chair, as any other quick-blooded person would have done, if such a tide of sudden and unexpected information were poured upon him. For a moment the blood rushed up into his cheeks—the first feeling of laying one's self under a deep obligation to any one being always painful. As long as he had thought that the miser advanced money on mortgage, it had seemed a mere matter of traffic; but when he heard that it was Burrel, it instantly became an obligation, and the first feeling, as I have said, was not altogether pleasant. Neither was the fact, that the gay, the wealthy, the dashing, the sarcastic cousin, of whom he had heard so much, had—notwithstanding the chilling coldness with which Sir Sidney had, a year or two before, repelled some advances which Beauchamp had made—neither was the fact, I say, that he had opened his way into their family circle, taken a place by their fire-side, and witnessed all the poverty and decay of their house, agreeable at its first aspect. But a moment's thought—by recalling all the delicacy of Henry Beauchamp's conduct, the kind and unaffected regard which he had shown towards them all, the persevering friendship with which he had followed up his purpose, and the real

services he had so zealously planned—soon took away from the mind of William Delaware all that was painful in the sudden news he heard, and the glow was almost at once succeeded by a bright and happy smile.

"I see it all now!" he cried; "I see it all now! and since such are the facts, Mr. Tims, the matter will be very easily arranged."

"Oh, doubtless, doubtless, sir!" replied Mr. Tims. "As you say, every one knows that Mr. Beauchamp has the wherewithal to do anything that he likes. His fortune is immense, sir! His fortune is immense! His father made a mint of money when he was governor of ——."

"How much did you say was the deficiency?" demanded Captain Delaware.

"Only ten thousand pounds, sir!" replied the miser. "A mere nothing to Mr. Beauchamp; and as you say, sir, he could raise it in a minute, if he liked. I was just going to see him upon the business, when I met you, and you were so violent, Captain Delaware."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Tims! I beg your pardon!" said the young officer. "I was in the wrong; but now I will save you the trouble you were about to take, and go on at once to my cousin myself. It is high time that I should acknowledge his generous kindness, and thank him for it."

"But, I trust, Captain Delaware—I trust," faltered forth the miser in an agony of fear, lest the job should be taken out of his hands by the meeting of the principal parties, "I trust that the business may be suffered to proceed in the regular train—I cannot be expected to lose all my little emoluments."

"Do not be afraid, sir!" replied Captain Delaware, who soon saw the current of the miser's thoughts. "Do not alarm yourself. The whole business shall pass through your hands; and you shall get as much upon it as you honestly can."

"Ay, sir! Now, that is what I call something like!" replied the relieved Mr. Tims. "Captain Delaware, will you take a glass of wine after your walk, or a glass of ale? But, as you say, time presses; and perhaps you may be anxious to see your excellent and worthy cousin, who doubtless can set all right—and high time it is he should do so, I can tell you; for my worthy nephew, Mr. Peter Tims, solicitor, of Clement's Inn, who is agent for my good lord and former patron, the Earl of Ashborough, is to be down early to-morrow—and he is a smart practitioner, I can tell you—and the bill being out, you know ——"

"The whole of course requires promptitude," interrupted

Captain Delaware. "Not that I think Lord Ashborough, or Lord Ashborough's lawyer, would act an ungentlemanly part in the business; but I know it would go far to break my father's heart, were the bill he has given to be presented before he could pay it. So now, Mr. Tims, good morning. I will call upon you again when I have seen my cousin."

Away sped William Delaware like an arrow from a bow, his breast full of mingled emotions, and his heart throbbing with contending feelings. He did not, it is true, reason much with himself, as he went, in regard to his position relative to Henry Beauchamp. He felt that he owed him a deep debt of gratitude—he felt that he had every reason to love and to admire him; and although he could not but experience, likewise, a sort of generous distaste to the mere act of borrowing money from any one, yet he determined to meet his cousin frankly and openly; for his heart had arrived at the same conclusion that his father's had reached before, and he thought, that if there were any man on earth on whom he would choose to confer the honour of accepting an obligation, it was Henry Beauchamp. He was soon in the streets of Emberton, and soon at the door of Burrel's lodging. His application for admittance was answered by the landlady, who told him that Mr. Burrel was gone; but that the valet was still there, and was settling some accounts with a gentleman in his own room.

"Gone!" cried Captain Delaware. "Gone! You mean gone out, Mrs. Wilson, surely?—but send the servant to me."

"Oh, no, sir! Sorry I am to say, he is gone for good and all, too surely," replied Mrs. Wilson. "But if you will walk into the parlour, Captain, I will send Mr. Harding to you directly—and I hope, if you should chance to hear of any good lodger, Captain, you will not forget me."

"No, no!" replied Captain Delaware, somewhat impatiently, as he walked forward into the little parlour which Burrel had inhabited; "but make haste, Mrs. Wilson, and send the man to me directly. What can be the meaning of all this?" he added, as the good woman shut the door. "Phoo! There must be some mistake;" and he walked towards the window which looked out into the road. Two minutes after he had taken up that position, steps sounded along the passage, and, the street-door being opened, Burrel's servant, Harding, ushered out the coarse, vulgar man, who we have mentioned before as having made his appearance in the stage-coach with Burrel. A few brief words, which Captain Delaware neither could nor would hear, concluded that worthy's

conversation with Mr. Beauchamp's servant; and the next moment Harding himself made his appearance, and, after a silent bow, stood waiting the young officer's commands.

"Mrs. Wilson must surely have been mistaken just now, in telling me that your master has left Emberton?" was Captain Delaware's abrupt address.

"No, sir; she was quite right!" replied Harding, in a respectful tone.

"Good God, this is most unfortunate!" cried Captain Delaware. "And, pray, what was the cause of his abrupt departure?"

Under ordinary circumstances, Harding would have adhered to his taciturnity; but Captain Delaware's declaration, that his master's absence was most unfortunate, excited his curiosity—not in the abstract, but personally, inasmuch as he did not know how far the unfortunate circumstance complained of might affect himself—and he therefore determined, as a nice feat of strategy, to provoke the young officer's loquacity, by showing that he knew or suspected more of his family concerns than the other imagined.

"I really cannot tell, sir," replied he, in a low and deferential tone, "what was the absolute cause; and perhaps I might offend you, if I were to say what I fancy it was—although nobody can regret it more than I do in my humble sphere."

"Not at all! I shall not be offended!" replied Captain Delaware, quickly. "On the contrary, I shall be glad to hear any cause assigned for what seems to me quite inexplicable on many accounts."

"Why, then, sir, the fact is," replied Harding, "that I could not help seeing that my master—I beg your pardon, sir, I am afraid I shall offend you—well, sir, that my master seemed to feel very differently towards my young lady at the park than I ever saw him feel before for any one; and I naturally thought, sir, that he was not going to be a single man much longer. But then, last night, he did not come home at all at ease; and this morning, after having been out for a long time in the park, or at the mansion, he returned as if he had got his death-blow—ordered me to get everything ready to set off for London; and mounting his own horse, not half an hour ago, galloped away before. So, of course, I thought he had been refused—and that is a thing he never was in his life before, I can answer for it."

Captain Delaware threw himself down in a chair, in a state of confusion, perplexity, and distress indescribable. He instantly combined Burrel's conduct with Blanche's illness of the previous night and that morning; and, cursing

internally what he called all the silly caprices and ill-placed delicacies of womankind, he was first about to set out to accuse his poor sister of having cast away the affections of a man whom she evidently loved, and to insist upon her recalling him. Then, however, he remembered the immediate business that had brought him there, and despair took possession of him. The ten thousand pounds were not forthcoming, Burrel was gone, Lord Ashborough's agent was to be down the next morning, and William Delaware knew that the effect upon his father's mind was likely to be terrible, if the necessary sum could not be procured in time.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, at length, "this is most unfortunate, indeed. What is to be done? Do you think your master could not be overtaken? I have business to settle with him of the utmost importance, which must be concluded to-day."

"My master left me a great many things, sir, to settle for him," replied the servant; "and perhaps that which you speak of was amongst them. He told me to call upon Mr. Tims, and——"

"That is exactly the question," cried Captain Delaware, interrupting him. "Have you got the money?"

"What!" cried Harding, almost as eagerly. "Has the money not been paid?"

"No, indeed!" answered Captain Delaware. "His agents declared that they had not assets—that a part of the sum—no less than ten thousand pounds—had not been paid into their hands!"

"It's a juggle!" cried the servant—"I see it all! It is a juggle of that rogue in grain, Peter Tims. No, no, sir, my master never dreamed that the money would not be paid; and he only ordered me to tell Mr. Tims at Ryebury, that he was to send up all papers for him to the lawyer's in London, as my master talks of going abroad. But I can set all right yet, sir, I think. Mr. Burrel has only gone to Dr. Wilton's, at present, and I know he will not be angry with me for going after him, to tell him all that has happened; and I will make bold to tell him, too, a great many things he does not know. So make your mind easy, sir. I beg your pardon for the liberty, but, depend upon it, the money shall be at Ryebury before to-morrow morning."

Captain Delaware paused a moment to think; for there was something unpleasant to his feelings in seeming to press for Henry Beauchamp's assistance, especially as he knew not what might have passed between him and Blanche. But there was no choice but to do so, or to plunge his family into ruin; and his meditation on the subject was brought to an

end by Harding—who was a man of fine feelings himself when it suited him—declaring that he held it his bounden duty to inform his master immediately, whether Captain Delaware liked it or not.

Captain Delaware, however, reflecting that Beauchamp was his cousin, and that no other resource was open to him, did not oppose the man's determination; and it being settled that Harding should mount one of his master's horses, and follow him to Dr. Wilton's rectory immediately, the young officer, with a mind much relieved, returned towards his paternal dwelling, meditating a severe cross-examination for Blanche, and internally declaring, "That Harding is a very honest fellow!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The very honest fellow was soon upon horseback, muttering to himself, "Ten thousand pounds short!—that would never do!—but I must mind what I am about, else he will go back and pay the money to this young chap, and then the whole business will be spoiled. Let me see;" and he set himself seriously to consider the best means of getting Burrel either to entrust him with the money—in which case he thought he might be able to cheat his accomplice, and appropriate the whole of that part of the spoil—or to pay it at once to Mr. Tims; and in that event, Harding still calculated on coming in for a share. It was yet early in the day: but, nevertheless, Master Harding rode as if for life; for being one of those personages who calculated almost every chance—the almost is very necessary, for he did not calculate all—he foresaw that it would be necessary for Burrel, who could not be supposed to have so large a sum about him, to procure the money from some other source, and knowing that Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, his master's agents, were part proprietors of a county bank at about twenty miles distance from Emberton, he concluded that Burrel's first application would be there, where his means of payment would be best known.

It so happened, however, that, on reaching the rectory, to his horror and astonishment he found that Mr. Burrel, on arriving at that place before him, had got into Dr. Wilton's carriage, which had been standing at the door, and had gone out with the worthy clergyman.

How soon they would be back no one could tell, and where they were gone to was as little known; so that worthy

Master Harding had to remain at the rectory, suffering pangs of impatience, that were not the less severe because he covered them over as usual with a face of calm indifferent gravity.

As he thus cogitated, the roll of wheels sounded past the stable; and, on looking out, Harding saw the plain chariot of the divine glide forward with merciful slowness to the door. The step descended with the same quiet and tranquil movement, and Henry Beauchamp, with deep and unusual gravity on his countenance, got out, and entered the house, followed by Dr. Wilton.

Harding lost no time; but immediately made his arrival known to his master, and, in a private audience, informed him of Mr. Tims' betrayal of his secret, and of all he had gathered from Captain Delaware, at the same time throwing in dexterously a few of those apparently casual words which he judged most likely to prevent Mr. Beauchamp from holding any direct communication with the family at Emberton. He still took care, however, to insinuate the necessity of immediately supplying the deficiency in the sum promised, and clenched the impression by directing his master's suspicions towards Lord Ashborough, and Peter Tims, Esq., of Clement's Inn, solicitor, &c. All that he dared not urge, on his own part, lest he should ruin his particular plans by the appearance of impudent intrusion, he allowed Beauchamp by implication—which is generally a sort of semi-lie—to attribute to Captain Delaware, trusting that any want of vraisemblance would be covered by the agitation of his master's mind. In all this he was wonderfully successful; and the more so, because everything that he said was fundamentally true, and therefore Henry Beauchamp had no difficulty in believing it to be so. That gentleman, however, expressed no surprise. In fact, he had been lately troubled with a great deal more surprise than he liked; and he was returning fast to his old habit of taking everything as a matter of indifference, or, at least, of seeming to do so. Beauchamp thought calmly for a few minutes, and then asked, "How far is it to ——?" naming the town where the county bank was situated.

"About twenty miles from Emberton, sir," replied the man; "sixteen or seventeen from this place."

"What is o'clock?" demanded his master, who, in the agitation of the preceding night, had forgotten to wind up his watch.

The man drew a fine French repeater from his pocket, and examined its face; but it lied like himself. Hope backed him against time for ten thousand; and though the watch was too

slow by a quarter of an hour, he took off ten minutes more from the hour it noted.

"Saddle Martindale!" said Mr. Beauchamp, when he had pondered the man's reply. "Bring him up directly! Then go back to Emberton, and to-morrow to London, where, do as I bade you before. If you have not sent over my dressing-cases here, you need not send them—if you have, have them brought back, and take them up with the other things."

The man bowed and withdrew; and Burrel, after another moment's thought, descended to Dr. Wilton's library, and informed his worthy tutor that he had received a sudden call to a different place, which compelled him to set out immediately. The cause of his departure he did not disclose, as he felt a great repugnance to make even so intimate a friend of all the parties as Dr. Wilton, acquainted with the circumstances of his cousins' difficulties, although he had not scrupled, during their drive, to inform the good clergyman, that there was no longer any probability—if there had indeed ever existed any—of an alliance between his own family and that of Sir Sidney Delaware. The cause of his different conduct, in regard to these two affairs, might perhaps be, that generosity is always taciturn where it is real—love is always loquacious where it is sure of not being laughed at.

Whether, in a longer conversation, the good doctor might or might not have seduced Beauchamp into telling him more, can hardly be ascertained; for scarcely had he announced his intended departure, when he was informed that his horse was at the door. Dr. Wilton had no time to express his surprise; but grasping his young friend's hand, he repeated twice, "Now mind, my dear Harry, mind! I tell you, I am sure there is some mistake, or some very base manœuvre, and you have promised not to quit London till you hear from me."

Beauchamp shook his head mournfully. "It is no use, my dear sir," he replied; "but, nevertheless, of course I will keep my word."

At the door his servant, while holding the stirrup, demanded, in a peculiarly humble tone, "Pray, sir, may I expect to see you at Emberton to-night, for there are several things——"

"I shall be at Ryebury, but certainly not at Emberton," answered Beauchamp. "If there be anything unsettled when you come to London, it must be done afterwards."

The man bowed low, perfectly satisfied; and Beauchamp and his horse went off at a gallop. "That will do it!" said Harding, as he saw his master depart; and, mounting his own beast, he returned calmly to Emberton, calculating to a

nicety at what hour his master would have paid the money into the hands of Mr. Tims.

In the meantime, Beauchamp rode on, with a light hand and an easy seat. He was one of those men who bring in their horses quite fresh, when every other horse in the field is dead beat; and feeling confident that he could arrange the whole business and return to Ryebury before night, he did not put Martindale to the top of his speed. What was his surprise, however, on passing a village church, after an hour and a half's riding, to find the hand of the dial—that fatal indicator, which, in every land, has pointed out from age to age the dying moment of hopes, and wishes, and enjoyments —demonstrating, beyond a doubt, that the hour was past, and his journey of no avail.

He rode on to the town of ——, however, but the bank was shut. He inquired for the partners, but there was only one in the town, and he was nowhere to be found.

Beauchamp bit his lip, and asked himself, "What is to be done now?" Some men would have thought, that, having exerted themselves so far, they had done enough, and would have let matters take their course; but he was not one of that class. The idea crossed his mind, indeed; and, to use one of his own expressions, he let it strike against his heart, to see whether it would ring with the sharp, cold, brazen sound of worldly feelings; but his heart was of a different metal, a great deal too soft to respond to such hard selfishness. "For his sake, for her sake, for all their sakes," he thought, "I must save them from disappointment and disgrace. This Ryebury miser may very likely have the money with him, and if not, he is, as he informed me, a proprietor in the neighbouring bank, and therefore can easily arrange the matter. I will tell him who I really am, and give him a power of attorney to sell out and pay himself."

With this resolution, he gave his horse half an hour's rest, and then turned his rein once more towards Ryebury, where we have already seen that the way was prepared for his purpose by the previous knowledge of his rank and fortune which the miser had obtained from Lord Ashborough's lawyer. As we have endeavoured to show in the preceding pages, Henry Beauchamp had his full share of weaknesses, amongst which was a very tolerable portion of irritable pride. A certain modification of this feeling had made him determine, from the first, not to set his foot in the streets of Emberton again. That place, it is true, had likewise, in his mind, a painful association of ideas as connected with a bitter disappointment; and although he was always ready to meet such regrets boldly, if they came alone, yet as they were

mingled, in this case, with mortified pride, his resolution gave way. He was a rejected suitor—a disappointed lover. He who had fancied that his heart was proof, had been captivated by a simple country girl, had danced attendance upon her for several weeks, and had ultimately been rejected. From the words that his servant had purposely let fall, he felt sure that the whole town of Emberton were by this time aware of his disappointment; and if ever you have been skinned alive, reader, you may have some idea of the irritable fear which he felt of running against the rough and rasping pity, even of the insignificant animals of a country town.

I wish it were possible to tell all the mingled feelings that were then to be found in the wayfarer's heart, as he walked on; and to point out how weaknesses, and virtues, and fine and generous sentiments, and human perversities, all linked arm-in-arm together, walked along with him on the way: how he felt that life was to him a blank—that the heart had grown old—that the bubble had burst—that the toy had lost its splendour; how he felt a pride at the very idea of serving her and hers, whose conduct had dashed the cup of happiness from his lip for ever—and how he thought that his affection might have been worthy of a higher estimation; and how he cursed his own folly, for ever suffering his heart to become the debased thing that a woman could trample upon.

Deep thoughts are most beguiling companions. Beauchamp found himself within a hundred and fifty yards of the miser's house, ere he thought that he had threaded half the way. It was just where the path he had been following joined the little wooded lane that led from Emberton, and rose up the high bank on which the house was situated. The increasing elevation brought a little more light; and, as Henry Beauchamp advanced, he saw a man and woman—who had been apparently walking together—part as he came near. The male figure turned hastily towards the little town; the woman glided away in the direction of the miser's house, and was lost in the obscurity. All was again still; but a moment after there was a low plaintive whistle, which called his attention for an instant. He heard it again, but at a greater distance, and thought, "It is the curlews upon the downs;" and, without giving it any further heed, he walked on, and rang the bell of Mr. Tims' house, in such a manner as to ensure that his visit would not be long unknown to the inmates.

A bustle within immediately succeeded; and, from the very highest window in the house, the head of Mr. Tims himself was thrust cautiously forth, like that of a tortoise from its shell, or a hedgehog beginning to unrol. The next moment

he retreated, and his voice was heard calling from the top of the stairs to the bottom, "Don't open the door, Sarah! Don't open the door! It can be nobody on any good errand at this time of night! Don't open the door on any account!" and again he came to the window to examine once more the aspect of his nocturnal visitant.

As soon as Beauchamp perceived the black ball, which he conceived to be the crowning member of Mr. Tims' person, once more protruded from the flat front of the house, he raised his voice sufficiently to convey the sounds to the elevated point from which the miser was reconnoitring, and desired him to come down, and give him admission; adding, "It is I, Mr. Burrel!"

"Mr. Burrel!—No, no!" cried the incredulous miser. "That is not Mr. Burrel's voice—No, no—I'm not to be done—Go along, sir!"

"Mr. Tims," said Beauchamp, quietly, "come down to me directly. I tell you again, I am Mr. Burrel—and having heard that a part of the sum that Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson——"

"Hush, hush!" cried the miser, now convinced. "Hush, hush!—I will come down, sir; I will come down directly. I did not know you at first; but I will come down in a minute. Sarah, get a light there." No reply. "Sarah, get a light!" again shouted Mr. Tims; and a moment after, Sarah's voice was heard, demanding what was the matter.

Mr. Tims now speedily descended; but, before he would admit his visitor, he again made him speak through the door, and took a view of his person by means of a little grated aperture, practised in the upper part thereof. The examination was satisfactory, and speedily bars fell and bolts were withdrawn, and Henry Beauchamp was admitted within the walls of a place whose precautionary fastenings were exactly like those of a prison, with the only difference of being intended to keep people out, rather than to keep them in. He was instantly ushered into the invariable parlour, where, by the light of a solitary tallow candle, white and perspiring under its efforts to give light in a warm autumn evening, he explained to Mr. Tims the purpose of his visit.

Mr. Tims, as we have already seen, well knew who Burrel, as he called himself, really was, even before he told him; and he had also employed means to ascertain the amount of his property; but, in the present instance, the prospect of deriving some usurious benefit from his companion's evident anxiety to furnish the money to Sir Sidney Delaware, forthwith made him take good care to be utterly ignorant of everything concerning him, except that he had drawn upon his

agents for a sum which they had not sufficient assets to pay.

He hemmed and he hesitated for a considerable time—declared that he did not doubt that he was Mr. Beauchamp; but, nevertheless, he must remind him that he had drawn in the name of Burrel—he might be perfectly solvent; but such things were never safe without good and sufficient security. He was quite ready to hand over to him the sum he had received from Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson; but as to advancing the ten thousand pounds more, really he did not see his way in the business clearly.

Mr. Beauchamp, who was not to be deceived by all this, reasoned with him for some time; but at length he assumed another tone, and rising, took up his hat and stick.

"Since this is the case, Mr. Tims," said he, "the matter must be arranged otherwise. I had proposed to ride on towards London to-night in the cool; but, as you doubt my respectability, I shall return to Emberton, and by daylight to-morrow set out for the town of ——, where you know very well, that my agents, to whom I before referred you, are part proprietors of the bank. There the matter will be done at once, and I shall be back again before Lord Ashborough's lawyer can arrive. You will therefore be so good as to give me the money which you have already received; we will exchange all vouchers on the subject, and we will do without you in the further transaction of this business."

This plan, of course, was not that which Mr. Tims proposed to himself, and the very mention thereof at once brought him to his senses. He declared that he had no doubt of Mr. Beauchamp's identity, and respectability, and solvency; and he should be very glad indeed to accommodate him; but, of course, Mr. Beauchamp would not object to give him a trifling commission in addition to the ordinary interest, in order to cover the risk.

"There is no risk at all, sir!" replied Beauchamp, somewhat sharply; "and you are just as much convinced at this moment that I am the person I represent myself to be, as I am myself. However, name the commission you require; and if, when weighed against a ride of forty miles, I find it the least troublesome of the two, you shall have it."

After undergoing a slight convulsion in his anxiety to gain all he could, and yet not to break off the negotiation, Mr. Tims named the sum; and although, at another time, Henry Beauchamp would have ridden ten times the distance sooner than yield to his exaction, yet the bitter disappointment he had received that morning, and the sort of mental lassitude that it had left, made him agree to the miser's demand,

though he did it with a sneer. This, however, by no means concluded the business; for Mr. Tims, calculating on the bonus promised him by Sir Sidney Delaware, proposed to pay the money over himself the next day; while Beauchamp—who, from the shuffling he observed, and a strong suspicion of some foul play on the part of his uncle's lawyer, did not choose to trust him—required that it should be immediately given into his own hands. On this point Mr. Tims fought inch by inch most gallantly. First, he declared that he had not so much money in the house, next, the necessary stamps could not be procured; and, lastly, when he saw that he had fairly worn his opponent out, he acknowledged that he expected a commission from Sir Sidney Delaware for raising the money; and, showing Beauchamp a letter from the baronet to that effect, he prevailed upon him to add that sum also to his note of hand for the ten thousand pounds, trusting to his own ingenuity to be able to wring it a second time from Sir Sidney himself. As soon as this was done, there was no longer any difficulty about the money; and while Beauchamp, furnished with pen and ink, remained writing in the parlour, with every now and then passing over his countenance a sneer at himself for having yielded so tamely to the miser's exactions, Mr. Tims visited some far distant part of his dwelling, and, after a considerable interval, returned with the whole of the sum required, which, thanks to the blessed invention of paper, now lay in a very small compass.

The rest of the business was soon settled, except the matter of a stamp; and as the miser—although he now frankly admitted that he knew the quondam Mr. Burrel to be Henry Beauchamp, nephew and heir to Lord Ashborough—seemed not a little anxious upon this matter, alleging sagely that Mr. Beauchamp might die, might be thrown from his horse and killed, his young visitor both drew up such an acknowledgment as might be afterwards stamped, if necessary, and desired him to send down to Emberton for what was further required, promising that he himself would return in an hour and sign the document which was still more cautiously to ensure the miser against loss.

He then rose and departed—Mr. Tims viewing, with that mixture of pity, wonder, and admiration, wherewith cowards regard heroes, the young gentleman issued forth into the dark night air, loaded with so large a sum, and armed with nothing but a small ash twig not thicker than his little finger. Burrel, however, like a great many other heroes, never suspected for a moment that he was in any danger, and walked on quite calmly, though he could not help noticing the same peculiar whistle which he had heard before. Nothing, how-

ever, occurred to interrupt him. A bright moon was now rising up; and, at the distance of a little more than a mile from the miser's house, just where the lane opened out upon a wide upland field, he perceived the figure of a man coming rapidly over the rise. He himself was hid by the bushes and trees; but, by the walk and air, he immediately recognised Captain Delaware in the person who now approached. There would be no use of staying here, at the fag-end of a chapter, to analyse or scrutinise the train of feelings or of reasonings that made Beauchamp at once determine to avoid an interview. Suffice it that his resolution was instantaneous; and pushing through the hedge, near which he stood, at the cost both of gloves and hands, he walked forward on the other side of the hedgerow, while William Delaware passed him within a couple of yards' distance

CHAPTER XVIII.

Blanche Delaware wept long, and bitterly; but she had dried her eyes, and bathed away the traces of her tears, when her father entered her room, and inquired tenderly after her health. "You do not look well, indeed, my dear Blanche," he said; "I wish you would send to Emberton for Mr. Tomkins."

Blanche assured him, however, that it was nothing but a headache—that she would be better soon—that she was better already—and that she was just thinking of coming down stairs. There was, indeed, a sort of trembling consciousness at her heart, which made her fear, at every word, that her father was going to touch upon the subject most painful to her heart; but she soon perceived that no suspicion had been awakened in his bosom; and she trusted that her brother would share in her father's blindness, especially as he had been absent so long in London. In this hope, and as far as possible to remove all cause for doubt, at least till she was able to bear an explanation, Blanche nerved her mind to restrain her feelings, and soon followed her father to the library. It was some time, as we have seen, before William Delaware returned, and Sir Sidney had walked out a little way towards Ryebury to meet him; but as he had been since at Emberton, he came of course by a different path, and arrived alone. His mind was in no slight degree irritated and impatient, from all that had passed; and poor Blanche had unfortunately so far fallen under his displeasure, from the facts which the ser-

vant had communicated to him, that he was prepared, as he mentally termed it, to give her a severe scolding; but when he entered the library, he found her looking so sad and woe-begone, that his heart melted; and sitting down beside her on the sofa, where she had been reading, he took her hand kindly in his, and asked her after her health, with a look full of fraternal affection. Blanche fancied that he too was deceived, and answered, that her complaint was only a head-ache, which would soon pass away.

"Are you sure, my sweet sister," asked Captain Delaware, "that it is not a heartache, which may be long ere it leave you, if you do not take the advice of some one who has a right to counsel you?"

The blood rushed burning into Miss Delaware's cheek, and she trembled violently; but her brother folded his arm round her waist, and still speaking gently and kindly, he went on:—"Hear me, dearest Blanche—We have been brought up as brother and sister seldom are—shut out the greater part of our lives from the rest of the world—loving each other dearly from the cradle—I, seeing little of mankind, except within the sphere of my own vessel; and you, seeing nothing of mankind at all. I believe that I have been the only confidant you have had from childhood, and I do not intend, dearest, that you should withdraw that confidence from me, till I put this little hand into that of the only man who ought to be your confidant from that moment." The tears rolled rapidly over Blanche Delaware's cheeks. "Although it may seem strange," continued her brother, "that you should be expected to make a confidant of any man at all in love matters, yet, for want of a better, Blanche, you must tell me all about it; and, perhaps, I shall not make the worse depository of a secret, for being a sailor. We are all tender-hearted, Blanche," he added, with a smile; "at least when we are on shore. So now tell me—has Mr. Burrel offered you his hand?"

Blanche was silent, though her brother waited during more than one minute for a reply; but the blood again mounted into her cheek, and the tears dropped thicker than before. "Well, well," he continued, "if you cannot answer by words, dear sister, I must try and make out your signals, though I have not, perhaps, the most correct code myself—Burrel has offered you his hand?" Blanche gently bent her head. It could scarcely be called an assent; but it was enough for her brother, and he went on. "Well, then, what was the difficulty? He loved you, and you loved him."

Blanche would have started up, but her brother's arm held her firmly; and, as her only resource, she hid her glowing

face upon his shoulder, and sobbed aloud. "Nay, nay, dear girl!" he cried, "where is the shame or the harm of loving a man who has long loved you? Do you think I have not seen your love, my dear sister? And do you think that I would suffer your heart to be won, unless I knew that the man who sought it really loved you and was worthy of you? But tell me, Blanche, where is the difficulty—what is the obstacle? Some trifle it must be—I will not call it a caprice, for my sister is above that—but some idle delicacy—some over-retiring modesty, I am afraid."

"No, no, William, I can assure you!" replied Blanche Delaware, raising her head; "I could be above all that too—but it cannot be."

"But, my dear Blanche," said Captain Delaware, more seriously than he had hitherto spoken—for he had endeavoured to mingle a playfulness with his tenderness—"but, my dear Blanche, you must assign some reason—at least to me. Burrel will think that we have all trifled with him. I stood virtually pledged to him for your hand, on condition that he won your love. That he must have felt he has done, or that you have been sporting with him—and such an imputation must not lie on you, nor must he think that I have deceived him."

"Do you know who he really is?" demanded Blanche, suddenly.

"Yes, Blanche, as well as you do," replied her brother. "He is your cousin and mine, Henry Beauchamp, whom we have both played with on that carpet in our childhood."

"It is useless, William—it is all useless!" replied Blanche, with a deep and painful sigh. "But there is my father's step in the hall—let me go, William, if you love me—and oh, do not, for Heaven's sake, increase his anxiety just now, by letting him know anything of all this! Let me go, my dear brother, I beseech you!" and struggling free, she made her escape by the door opposite to that by which Sir Sidney Delaware was just about to enter the library.

Captain Delaware had a painful task before him, in the necessity of communicating to his father the result of the inquiries he had set out in the morning to make, although he could not find in his heart to tell him explicitly upon what doubtful chances his hope of receiving the money, ere the next morning, was founded. He confined his information, therefore, as much to general terms as possible; and informed Sir Sidney that Mr. Tims had not yet indeed received the money, which was to be furnished by a third party, but that he doubted not it would be paid that night, or early the next morning, before Lord Ashborough's lawyer could arrive.

These tidings stopped any further inquiries from Sir Sidney Delaware, though they did not satisfy or quiet his mind; and he concluded that his son had told him all he knew, although that all but served to render him anxious and impatient. He remained restless and disturbed through the whole of the day—raised a thousand aerial hypotheses in regard to Mr. Tims' delay—drew a general picture of all misers, lawyers, and usurers, which might have ornamented the scrap-book of Eblis—and more than once threatened to visit the worthy proprietor of Ryebury himself, from which feat he was with difficulty dissuaded by his son, who, in fact, was but little less anxious than himself.

Perhaps, indeed, Captain Delaware's anxiety was the more keen and corroding, because he forced himself to conceal it, and to appear perfectly confident and careless. Blanche, on her part, avoided all communication with her brother, except that, when they met at dinner and at tea, her eyes besought him to spare her. The moments waned; neither Mr. Tims nor Burrel, nor any messenger from either, appeared during the evening; and, as night began to fall, Captain Delaware's impatience gradually got the better of his self-command; and finding himself in the situation of a shell, the fuse of which was rapidly burning down to the powder, and which must consequently explode in a short time, he thought it better to carry himself away, and let his heat and disappointment wreak itself upon any other objects than his friends and relations.

As the most natural vent for such feelings, he took his way towards Ryebury; but when he returned, after about an hour's absence, he appeared to the eyes of his sister—who strove to read his looks with no small apprehension—more heated and irritable than before.

"Well, William, what does Mr. Tims say now?" demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, whose own anxiety had at once told him whither his son had turned his footsteps, although Captain Delaware had given no intimation of his purpose.

"I have not seen him, sir!" was the reply. "The old dotard would not let me in. Afraid of robbers, I suppose. I rang till I was tired, and then came away. But it is no matter; the money will be forthcoming to-morrow, I have no doubt. The coach does not arrive till the afternoon; and Lord Ashborough's solicitor did not come by it to-night, for I inquired at the inn."

Things which, buoyed up on the life-preserver of a light heart, float like feathers over all the waves of adversity that inundate this briny world, sink the soul down to the bottom of despair the moment that the life-preserver, dashed against

some sharp rock, or beaten by some more violent surge, suffers the waters to flow in, and the fine elastic air to escape. Not many weeks before, Blanche Delaware would have wondered, in the happy contentedness of her own heart, at the anxiety and disappointment of her brother and her father, and would have looked upon the events which they seemed to regret so bitterly, but as a very small and easily borne misfortune. But in the present depression of her spirits, it overwhelmed her even more than it did them. Her own grief was so deep, that she could not well bear any more; and, soon after her brother's return, she retired to her chamber to weep.

The night went by, and Blanche and her father descended to the breakfast-table somewhat earlier than usual; for care makes light sleepers.

"Is William out?" demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, as he met his daughter. "I wished to have gone to Ryebury with him."

"I do not think he is down yet!" she replied. "I have not seen him, and yet it is odd he should be the last up to-day."

"Send up and see, my love!" said her father; which was accordingly done, and the result was, that Captain Delaware was found just dressing. Blanche thought it very strange that on such an occasion her brother should yield to a laziness he did not usually indulge; but Captain Delaware seemed in no hurry to come down, and the breakfast proceeded without him. Before it was concluded, however, and before he had made his appearance, the sound of wheels coming up the avenue was heard, and a hack post-chaise drove to the door. The whole proceedings of its occupants were visible from the breakfast-parlour; and, as Sir Sidney sat, he could perceive that the first person who got out was a stout, unpleasant-looking man, in whom, although greatly changed since last he saw him, he recognised Lord Ashborough's lawyer. The next that followed was evidently a clerk, and he carried in his hand one of those ominous-looking bags of green serge. Mr. Peter Tims, immediately after the descent of the clerk, turned back to the chaise door, and spoke a few words to some one who remained within, and then followed the servant up the steps of the terrace.

Blanche looked at her father. He was very pale. "I wish you would call William, my love!" he said, with a faint effort to smile; "we may want his presence in dealing with these gentlemen."

Blanche hastened to obey, and, almost as she left the room, Mr. Peter Tims was announced. He entered with a low bow,

but a face full of cool effrontery, which gave the lie to his profound salutation. He immediately informed Sir Sidney that he now had the pleasure of waiting upon him to settle the little business between him and his noble client, Lord Ashborough; and he ended by presenting the bill for twenty-five thousand pounds, which had now been due nearly two days.

Sir Sidney Delaware begged him to be seated, and then, in an embarrassed but gentlemanly manner, explained to him that the money which he had expected to receive had not yet been paid; but that he trusted that it would be so in the course of the day.

The face of Mr. Peter Tims grew dark; not that he did not anticipate the very words he heard, but that he thought fit to suit his looks to his actions. "Ha! then," he cried, "my lord was right, sir!—my lord was right, when he said he was sure that the annuity would never be redeemed, and that the only object was to reduce the interest. But I can tell you, Sir Sidney, that such conduct will not do with us!" and he made a sign to his clerk, who instantly left the room. "We had heard something of this yesterday, and that made me come as far as —— last night."

Sir Sidney Delaware's cheek grew red, and his lip quivered, but it was with anger. "What is the meaning of this insolence, sir?" he demanded, in a tone that changed Mr. Tims' manner at once from the voluble to the dogged. "You seem to me to forget yourself somewhat strangely!"

"Oh, no, sir, no!" replied the lawyer. "All I have to say is—This, I think, is your bill—now more than due. Are you ready to take it up? If not, I must proceed as the law directs!"

"And pray, sir, what does the law direct you to do," demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, "when the payment of a sum of money is delayed for a few hours, by some accidental circumstance?"

"It is all very well talking, Sir Sidney!" said the man of law; and was proceeding in the usual strain when Captain Delaware entered the room, and, passing behind his father, whispered something in the baronet's ear that made him start. Almost at the same moment, the lawyer's clerk returned, followed by one of those ill-looking fellows, who, as poor Colley Cibber declared, were "fitted by nature for doing ugly work," and, consequently, engaged by the sheriffs for that purpose.

"Which is the gemman, Mr. Tims?" cried the bailiff; for such was the personage now introduced. "Is't the ould un, or the young un? for we must not be after mistaking."

"Stop a moment!" cried Captain Delaware. "Pray, who are these persons, sir?" he continued, addressing Mr. Tims.

"Merely my clerk, sir, my clerk!" replied Mr. Tims, who did not particularly approve the flashing of Captain Delaware's eye. "Merely my clerk, and an officer of the sheriff's court, instructed to execute a writ upon the person of Sir Sidney Delaware, at the suit of my noble lord the Earl of Ashborough. You know, Captain Delaware," he added, edging himself round the table to be out of reach of the young officer's arm; "you know, you yourself assured me that the money would be ready before the time, and now two days have elapsed; so that it is clear, sir—it is clear, I say, that all this is nothing but trifling."

"Pray, Mr. Tims," said Captain Delaware, in a milder tone than the other expected, "answer me one question, as you are a shrewd and clever lawyer, and I want my mind set at rest."

"Certainly, sir!" replied Mr. Tims; "very happy to answer any legal question, provided always, nevertheless, that it does not affect the interests of my client."

"My question is merely this, sir," answered the young officer, whose mind—both from what Burrel's servant had let fall, and from his own observations—had come to the conclusion, that the Messieurs Tims, uncle and nephew, had combined to prevent the payment of the money. "My question is merely this—Suppose two or three men were to enter into an agreement for the purpose of delaying the payment of a sum of money, in order to arrest a person on a bill they had obtained from him, would they not be subject to indictment for conspiracy?"

The countenance of Mr. Tims fell; but the moment after, it kindled again with anger, and he replied, "I will answer that question in another time and place; and, in the meantime, officer, do your duty!"

"Stand back, sir!" said Captain Delaware, sternly, as the man advanced. "Mr. Tims, you shall answer that question in another time and place, and that fully. In the meantime, as you say, be so good as to present your bill. I shall only observe upon your conduct, that the fact of your having obtained this very writ, before you had ever presented the bill for payment, gives a strong presumption that you had taken means to prevent the money being ready, and concluded that those means had been successful."

Mr. Tims turned very pale; but he was not one of those unfortunate men whose impudence abandons them at the moment of need, and he almost instantly replied, "No, sir, no! It affords no presumption. The fact is, we never thought

the money would be paid. We always knew that the whole business was an artifice—that you had no honest means of coming by the money—and, after having allowed one whole day, and a part of another to elapse, that there might be no excuse, we came prepared to make the artifice fall upon the heads of those that planned it. Officer, why do you not execute the writ?"

"Because the gemman demands you should present the bill!" replied the man.

"The bill matters nothing—the debt has been sworn to," answered Mr. Tims; "but that there may be no further quibble—there—there, sir, is a bill signed by Sir Sidney Delaware for the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, which became due the day before yesterday. Are you ready to pay it? Can you take it up? Are you prepared to discharge it?"

"We are, sir!" replied Captain Delaware; "and, when we have done so, I shall take the liberty of caning you for the words you have had the impudence to use, and the imputations you have been shameless enough to utter, till you shall have as good an action of battery against me, as I shall have an indictment for conspiracy against you."

"No, no, William!" said Sir Sidney Delaware. "There is not an instrument of castigation in the house, from the dog-whip to the stick with which the boy cudgels the jackass, that would not be disgraced by touching the back of that man or his instigator."

"First, sir, let us see the money," cried Mr. Tims; "and then let any man touch me if he dare. The money, sir! Where is the money, I say?"

"Here, sir!" replied Captain Delaware, drawing out a pocket-book. "Here is the money that you require; and, therefore, before proceeding to anything else, we will terminate this business."

It would be difficult, in that confused gabble of a thousand depraved dialects which the reviews call "good manly English," to express the horror and despair of Mr. Peter Tims, at finding that—notwithstanding all the arts and artifices he had used, and which were a thousandfold more in number than we have had space to put down—the money had been obtained; and, therefore, that the patronage and business of Lord Ashborough might be looked upon as lost to him for ever.

Nothing, however, could be done; and he was obliged to sit down and transact the receipt of the money, and all the other formal business incident to the occasion, with a bitter heart and a gloomy countenance. The notes, indeed, which

Captain Delaware handed to him, in discharge of his father's bill, he examined with scrupulous attention; and had he been able to detect even a suspicious look about any of them, would probably have made it a plea to delay the acceptance of the payment; but all was fair and clear; and in half an hour the bill was paid, and Sir Sidney Delaware's estate was delivered from the burden which had kept his family in poverty for so many years. Mr. Tims, indeed, took care to conduct himself with a degree of irritating insolence, intended, beyond doubt, to tempt the young officer to strike him as he had threatened, which would probably have been the case, had not Sir Sidney Delaware pointed out to his son, in a calm bitter tone, the real object of the lawyer, observing aloud, that pettifogging attorneys often made considerable sums by carrying actions of assault into a peculiar court, where the costs to the offender were very severe.

This turned the scale; and, when the whole was concluded, the lawyer was suffered to depart, loaded with nothing but disappointment and contempt.

CHAPTER XIX.

In our eagerness to get at the scene just depicted, we have somewhat overrun the scent, and must return, however unwillingly, to the time and circumstances under which Henry Beauchamp left Mr. Tims of Ryebury, on the preceding night. It was, as may be remembered, fine, clear, autumn weather. The night, indeed, would have been dark, but for the moon, which poured a grand flood of light through the valleys, and over the plains; and Mr. Tims, who loved the light—not so much because his own ways were peculiarly good, as because it is known to be a great scarer of those whose ways are more evil still—remarked with satisfaction, as he ushered his guest to the door, that it was as clear as day.

"Sally, Sally!" he exclaimed, as soon as Mr. Beauchamp was gone, "are all the doors and windows shut?"

"Lord bless me, yes!" answered the dirty maid, shouting in return from the kitchen, like Achilles from the trenches. "As fast shut as hands can make them."

"What is that noise, then?" demanded the miser, suspiciously.

"Only me putting in the lower bolt of the back-door," answered the maid.

"Oh, Sally! you never will do things at the time you

are bid!" cried the reproachful usurer. "I told you always to shut up at dusk. But come here, and put on your bonnet. I want you to run down to the town for a stamp."

Sally grumbled something about going out so late, and meeting impudent men in the lanes; but after a lapse of time, which the miser thought somewhat extraordinary in length, she appeared equipped for the walk, and received her master's written directions as to the stamp, or rather stamps, he wanted, and where they were to be found in Emberton. The miser then saw her to the door, locked, bolted, and barred it after her departure, and returning to the parlour, lifted the dim and long-wicked candle, bearing on its pale and sickly sides the evidence of many a dirty thumb and finger; and then with slow, and somewhat feeble steps, climbed, one by one, the stairs, and retired to a high apartment at the back of the house, for which he seemed to entertain a deep and reverential affection.

Well, indeed, might he love it; for it was the temple of his divinity, the place in which his riches and his heart reposed, and which contained his every feeling. There, shrined in a safe of iron, let into the wall, were the Lares and Penates of his house, bearing either the goodly forms of golden disks—with the face of the fourth George pre-eminent on one side, and of his namesake saint, all saddleless and naked, on the other—or otherwise, the forms of paper parallelograms, inscribed with cabalistic characters, implying promises to pay. Here Mr. Tims sat down, after having closed the door, and placed the candle on a table; and, throwing one leg clothed in its black worsted stocking over the other, he sat in a sort of rapt and reverential trance, worshipping Mammon devoutly, in the appropriate forms of vulgar and decimal fractions, interest, simple and compound.

Scarcely had he gone upstairs, however, when a change of scene came over the lower part of his house. A door, which communicated with the steps that led down to the kitchen, moved slowly upon its hinges, and the moonlight streaming through the grated fan window, above the outer door, fell upon the form of a man emerging with a careful and noiseless step from the lower story into the passage. The beams, which were strong enough to have displayed the features of any one where this very suspicious visitor stood, now fell upon nothing like the human face divine, the countenance of the stranger being completely covered and concealed by a broad black crape, tied tightly behind his head. As soon as he had gained the passage, and stood firm in the moonlight, another form appeared, issuing from the mouth of the same narrow and somewhat steep staircase, with a face equally well concealed.

A momentary conversation was then carried on in a whisper between the two, and the first apparition, looking sharply at the chinks of the several doors around, seemingly to discover whether there was any light within, replied to some question from the other, "No, no! He is gone upstairs, to hide it in the room where she told us he kept it. Go down and tell Wat to come up, and keep guard here; and make haste!"

The injunction was soon complied with; and a third person being added to the party, was placed, with a pistol in his hand, between the outer door and the top of the stairs. Before he suffered his two companions to depart, however, on the errand on which they were bent, he seemed to ask two or three questions somewhat anxiously, to which the former speaker replied, "Hurt him! Oh, no! do not be afraid! Only tie him, man! I told you before that we would not. There is never any use of doing more than utility requires. He will cry out when he is tied, of course; but do not you budge."

"Very well!" answered the other, in the same low tone; and his two comrades began to ascend the stairs. Before they had taken three steps, however, the first returned again to warn their sentinel not to use his pistol but in the last necessity, observing that a pistol was a bad weapon, for it made too much noise. He then resumed his way, and in a moment after was hid from his companion. The whole topography of the house seemed well known to the leader of these nocturnal visitants; for, gliding on as noiselessly as possible, he proceeded direct towards the room where the miser sat.

Mr. Tims, little misdoubting that such gentry were already in possession of his house, had remained quietly musing over his gains, somewhat uneasy, indeed, at the absence of Sally, but not much more apprehensive than the continual thoughts of his wealth caused him always to be.

He had indeed once become so incautious, in the eagerness of his contemplations, as to draw forth his large key, and open the strong iron door which covered the receptacle of his golden happiness. But immediately reflecting that Sally was not in the house to give the alarm, if any cause of apprehension arose below, he relocked the chest, and was returning to the table, when a sudden creak of the stairs, as if one of the steps had yielded a little beneath a heavy but cautious foot, roused all his fears. His cheeks and his lips grew pale; his knees trembled; and, with a shaking hand, he raised the candle from the table, and advanced towards the door.

It was opened but too soon; and, ere the unhappy miser reached it, the light fell upon a figure which left him no doubt of the purport of the visit. It was not for his life the old man feared half so much as for his treasure, in the defence of which

he would have fought an universe of thieves. A blunderbuss hung over the mantelpiece, and the pulley of an alarum-bell by the window, and the miser's mind vibrated for a single moment between the two. Dropping the candle almost at once, however, he sprang towards the bell, while one of the men shouted to the other near whom he passed, "Stop him! Stop him from the bell! By G—, he will have the whole country upon us!"

Both sprang forward. The candle, which had blazed a moment on the floor, was trampled out, and complete darkness succeeded. Then followed a fearful noise of eager running here and there—the overthrowing of chairs and tables—the dodging round everything that could be interposed between people animated with the active spirit of flight and pursuit—but not a word was spoken. At length there was a stumble over something—then a heavy fall, and then a sound of struggling, as of two people rolling together where they lay. Another rushed forward, and seemed to grope about in the darkness. "D—— it, you have cut me, Stephen!" cried a low deep voice.

"Murder! Murder! Murder!" screamed another. "Oh! Oh! Oh!" and all was silent.

Two men had fallen, and another had bent down over them; but only one of those who had rolled on the floor rose up, beside the other who had been kneeling. Both remained quite still, with nothing but the monosyllable, "Hush!" uttered by either.

After a pause of several minutes, the one observed, in a low voice, "You have done him, Stephen!"

"He would have it," replied the other. "Run down and get a light, and do not let the youngster know how it has turned out."

"But I am all bloody!" said the other. "He will see it in a minute. Besides, you have cut my hand to the bone."

"Well, you stay, and I will go down," replied the first.

"Not I!" was the answer. "I'll not stay here in the dark with him."

"Then go down, and do not waste more time," said the first, somewhat sharply. "Tell the boy, if he ask, that the old man cut your hand while you were tying him—but, at all events, make haste!"

The other obeyed, and, after a long and silent interval, returned with the light. It flashed upon a ghastly spectacle. There, on the floor, at a short distance from the bell-rope, which he had been endeavouring to reach, lay the figure of the unhappy miser, in the midst of a pool of gore, which was still flowing slowly from two deep gashes in his throat. His

mouth was open, and seemed in the very act of gasping. His eyes were unclosed, and turned up, with a cold, dull, meaningless stare; and his grey hair, long, lank, and untrimmed, lay upon his ashy cheeks, dabbled with his own blood. By his side, exactly on the very spot where he had stood when the other left him, appeared the murderer. His features could not be seen, for they were still concealed by the crape over his face; but the attitude of his head and whole person evinced that his eyes were fixed, through the black covering, upon the spot where his victim lay, now first made visible to his sight by the entrance of the light. In his hand was a long clasp-knife, hanging laxly, with the point towards the ground, and a drop or two of blood had dripped from it upon the floor. The disarrayed chamber, the overturned furniture, and a small stream of blood that was winding its way amidst the inequalities of an old-fashioned floor, towards the doorway, where the beams had sunk a little, made up the rest of the scene—and a fearful scene it was.

"Is he quite dead?" demanded the man who entered, after a momentary pause.

"As dead as Adam!" replied the other; "and, as the business is done, there is no use of thinking more about it!" But the very words he used, might seem to imply that he had already been thinking more of what had passed than was very pleasing. "Such obstinate fools will have their own way—I never intended to kill him, I am sure; but he would have it; and he is quiet enough now!"

The other approached, and though, perhaps, the less resolute ruffian of the two, he now gazed upon the corpse, and spoke of it with that degree of vulgar jocularity which is often affected to conceal more tremor and agitation than the actors in any horrid scenes may think becoming. Perhaps it was the same feelings that attempted to mask themselves in the overdone gaiety which Cromwell displayed on the trial and death of Charles Stuart.

"The old covey is quiet enough now, as you say!" remarked the inferior ruffian, drawing near with the light. "His tongue will never put you or me into the stone pitcher, Stephen."

"His blood may," replied the other, "if we do not make haste. She said the key of the chest was always upon him. There it is in his hand, as I live! We must make you let go your hold, sir; but you grasp it as tight in death as you did in life."

With some difficulty the fingers of the dead man were unclosed, and the large key of the iron safe wrenched from his grasp. The freshly stimulated thirst of plunder did

away, for the moment, all feelings of remorse and awe; and the two ruffians hastened to unlock the iron door in the wall, the one wielding the key, while the other held the light, and gazed eagerly over his shoulder. The first drawer they opened caused them both to draw a long deep breath of self-gratulation, so splendid was the sight of the golden rows of new sovereigns and old guineas it displayed. A bag was instantly produced, and the whole contents emptied in uncounted. The hand of the principal plunderer was upon the second drawer, when a loud ring at the house-bell startled them in their proceedings.

"He will not open the door, surely?" cried the one.

"No, no! I told him not," answered the other. "But let us go down, to make sure."

Setting the light on the floor, they both glided down the stairs, and arrived just in time to prevent their comrade, whom they had left upon guard below, from making an answer, as he was imprudently about to do. The bell was again rung violently, and after a third application of the same kind, some heavy blows of a stick were added. Again and again the bell was rung; and as the visitor seemed determined not to go away without effecting an entrance, the man who seemed to have led throughout the terrible work of that night, put his hand slowly into his pocket, and, drawing forth a pistol, laid his hand upon the lock of the door.

"He will ring there till Sally comes up," observed the other in a whisper, "and then we shall be all blown."

Just as the click of cocking the pistol announced that the determination of the first ruffian was taken, a receding step was heard, and calmly replacing the weapon, he said, "He is gone! now let us back to our work quick, Tony!"

"All is very silent upstairs," said the young man who had been keeping watch, in a low and anxious tone.

"Oh, the old man is tied and gagged sufficiently! Do not be afraid, Wat!" replied the other. "Only you keep quiet—if any one comes, make no answer; but if they try to force a way in by the back door, which is on the latch, give them a shot! You have good moonlight to take aim;" and mounting the stairs with the same quiet steps, he once more entered the chamber of the miser.

The young man who remained below listened attentively; and though the footfalls of his two comrades were as light as they well could be, yet he heard them distinctly enter the room where they had left the candle. As their steps receded, however, and no other sound followed, he suffered the hand which held the pistol to drop heavily by his side.

"They have killed the old man!" he muttered. "He

would never lie still like a lubber, and see them pillage his chests, without making some noise, if he were not dead! I thought that cold-blooded rascal would do it, if it suited his cursed utility. I wish to God I had never——"

But the vain wish was interrupted by the sound of a door, gently opened below; and, in a moment after, the form of Sally, the miser's maid, appeared gliding up with a sort of noiseless step, which showed her not unconscious of all that was proceeding within her master's dwelling. A low and hasty conversation now took place between her and the man upon watch, who told her his suspicions of the extent to which his companions had pushed their crime, notwithstanding a promise which they had made, it seems, to abstain from hurting their victim. Somewhat to his surprise and disgust, however, he found, that though the woman was trembling in every limb, from personal agitation and fear of discovery, yet she felt little of the horror which he himself experienced, when he reflected on the murder of the poor defenceless old man. She replied in a low, but flippant tone, that dead men tell no tales; and added, that she dared to say Mr. Harding would not have done it, if the old fool had not resisted.

At that moment the light from above began to glimmer upon the stairs, and the two murderers soon after appeared, the one carrying a candle, and the other a heavy bag, with which they at once proceeded into the little parlour, where the old man had so lately sat with Mr. Beauchamp. The other two followed, and the one who had remained below immediately taxed the principal personage in the tragedy, whom we may now call Harding, with the act he had just committed.

"Hush, hush!" cried Harding, in a stern tone, but one, the sternness of which was that of remorse. "Hush, hush, boy! I would not have done it, if I could have helped it. But there!" he added, putting the heavy bag upon the table; "there is enough to make your mother easy for the rest of her days."

"And shall I be ever easy again for the rest of mine?" demanded the youth.

"I hope so!" answered his companion, drily. "But come, we must not lose time. This is too heavy for one of us to carry; and yet we have not found a quarter of what we expected. Sally, my love, fetch us some cloths, or handkerchiefs, or something. We may as well divide the money now, and each man carry his own."

So saying, he poured the mingled heap of gold and silver on the table; and as soon as some cloths were procured to

wrap it in, he proceeded to divide it with his hand into four parts, saying, "Share and share alike!"

Some opposition was made to this by the man who had accompanied him in the more active part of the night's work, and who declared that he did not think that the person who only kept watch, or the woman either, deserved to be put on the same footing with themselves, who had encountered the whole danger. He was at once, however, sternly overruled by Harding, whose character seemed to have undergone a strange change amidst the fiery, though brief period of intense passions through which he had just passed. The softer metal had been tempered into hard steel; but when for a moment he removed the crape from his face, to give himself more air, it was pale, anxious, and haggard; and had a look of sickened disgust withal, that was not in harmony with his tone.

Carefully, though rapidly, he rendered the several lots as nearly equal as the mere measurement of the eye would permit, bade his comrades each take that which he liked, and contented himself with the one they left. The necessity of haste, or rather the apprehensiveness of guilt, made them all eager to abridge every proceeding; and the money being tied up, and a large sum in notes divided, they prepared to depart.

"Had we better go out by the back door or the front?" demanded Harding, turning to the woman.

"Oh, la! by the front to be sure!" she replied. "The hind who lives in the cottage on the lea opposite, might see us if we went out by the back. Nobody can see us come out in the lane, unless some one be wandering about."

"We must take our chance of that!" replied Harding; and, putting out the light, he led the way to the door.

CHAPTER XX.

"And now, my dear William," said Sir Sidney Delaware, as soon as Mr. Tims had departed, and the rolling wheels of his postchaise were no longer heard grating down the western avenue—"and now, my dear William, lay your angry spirit. Depend upon it, that man carries with him a sufficient punishment in the disappointment he has suffered. He is one of that class of rogues for whom the old Athenians, finding no appropriate corporeal infliction, decreed the punishment of the Stela; or, in other words, ordered their names and infamy

to be engraved upon a pillar, and thus held them up to shame for ever."

"As our law has no such just award," replied Captain Delaware, "I should certainly have had great pleasure in writing his shame on his back with a horsewhip instead; but of course, as you did not like it, I forbore."

"No, no, my dear boy!" said his father; "you would have degraded yourself, gratified him, and had to pay a large sum for a small satisfaction. But now all that is past, explain to us the rest of the business. How happened the money to arrive so apropos, and without the accompaniment of the miser of Ryebury? Was Mr. Tims, senior, unwilling to meet Mr. Tims, junior, on a business, in regard to which it was evident that the lawyer both wished and anticipated a different result?"

"Strange enough to say, my dear sir," replied Captain Delaware, "you are asking me questions which I cannot at all answer. There is Blanche smiling," he added, "because I told her the same, before I came down, and she chose to be incredulous; though she knows that there never was sailor or landsman yet so little given to romancing as I am."

"But you can tell me when it was you received the money?" said Sir Sidney, in some degree of surprise.

"Oh, certainly, sir!" answered his son. "It was this morning, not long before Blanche came up to my room."

"Why, they told me you had not been out this morning," said his father.

"Neither have I, my dear sir," replied Captain Delaware.

"In short, papa, he makes a mystery of the whole affair," said Blanche; "and will not say how or where he got it."

"You are wrong, my dear sister," rejoined her brother. "I am perfectly willing to say how and where I got it; and, in fact, I told you before."

"Oh, but William!" exclaimed his sister, "I saw very well that you were only jesting. You did not, I am sure, intend me to give credence to that story?"

"Well for you that you are not a man, my pretty Blanche," answered Captain Delaware, shaking his hand at her, good-humouredly. "I will repeat the same, word for word, to my father; and if he do not believe me, I will swear to it, if he likes."

"Not I—not I, William!" said Sir Sidney. "Anything that you assert in so solemn a manner, I will believe without any swearing, however improbable it may be."

"Well, then, my dear sir," replied Captain Delaware, "the fact is this: when I rose this morning, in looking about for something on my dressing-table, I found a paper parcel

with my name written upon it; and, on opening it, saw the notes which I just now gave to that blackguard. There was no one thing in or about the parcel that could lead me to divine from whom or whence it came; but as it contained the precise sum required, and was addressed to myself, I could not doubt the purpose for which it was intended. I have a vague recollection, indeed, of seeing it lying there last night; but I was out of humour, and somewhat sick at heart, and took but little notice of anything. However, it must have been there when I went to bed, for no one could have come into my room without my hearing them."

"Hem!" said Sir Sidney Delaware, with a smile. "Hem!" and, notwithstanding his promise of full faith in his son's account, it was evident he did not give credit to a word of it. "Well, well, William," he said, "we will not press you hard; though your grave face almost deserves that one should believe you."

"On my word, sir! On my honour!" reiterated Captain Delaware. "Every word that I tell you is true. This is very hard indeed that I am not to be believed, even when I pledge my honour."

"Nay, nay!" said Sir Sidney. "If you bring your honour into the scrape, my dear boy, I suppose we must believe you. But you will not, I dare say, deny that you have some shrewd guess at how the money came there, or who sent it?"

"In regard to the person who sent it," answered Captain Delaware, a good deal mortified at doubts which he felt he did not deserve, "I have certainly a very strong suspicion, though I do not feel justified in naming the friend to whom my mind turns; but, as to how it came there, I am fully as ignorant as yourself or Blanche."

"Well, all I can say is, that the whole business is very extraordinary," replied Sir Sidney Delaware, more gravely than he had hitherto spoken. "Indeed, I know not which would seem the most strange, that such a large sum should be left in your room without your privity or knowledge; or that my son should so strongly assert, even in jest, what is not strictly true."

"Sir, you are doing me injustice!" said Captain Delaware, with a burning cheek and a quivering lip; "and, as it is so, I will soon investigate, and, if possible, discover how it was that this took place;" and, striding across the room, he rang the bell with a degree of violence which showed the pain it cost him to brook respectfully, even from his father, the doubt that Sir Sidney's last words insinuated. Blanche gently glided across the room; and, laying her hand upon his arm, raised her beautiful eyes to his with a look half imploring,

half reproachful. Captain Delaware did not reply, but turned away; and, walking to the window, looked out into the park till the servant appeared.

"Who left a paper parcel on my dressing-table last night?" he demanded abruptly, and somewhat sharply too, as the man entered.

The first reply was a stare of astonishment at the unwonted tone of one usually so mild and kindly in his whole deportment. "I am sure I do not know, sir!" answered the man as soon as he had recovered. "I did not!"

"William, you are heated," said Sir Sidney Delaware, interrupting his son, as he was about to put another question to the servant. "I perceive now, perhaps too plainly, that the matter is not a jest; and therefore, of course, believe what you have said. The business, however, must be investigated, as we cannot lie under so great an obligation to any one without due acknowledgment and repayment. Did you see any stranger about the house or near it during the course of yesterday evening?" he continued, turning to the servant.

"No one, sir," replied the man. "That is to say, no one near the house. In the lanes, at the back of the park, I met Harding, Mr. Burrel's valet, loitering about with another young man towards dusk; and now, I recollect, the housemaid declared that she saw some one just passing by the terrace at about eight or nine o'clock."

"Send the housemaid here!" said Sir Sidney; "and desire Mrs. Williams"—the name of the old housekeeper—"and desire Mrs. Williams to come with her."

The commands of Sir Sidney were immediately obeyed, and the examination of the housemaid began in form. The footman, however, had already told nearly as much as she could tell herself. When going along one of the corridors, during the previous evening, to shut the windows which looked out upon the western part of the park, she had seen a gentleman, she said, walking along just below the terrace, towards the wood. She could not tell who he was, for she only saw him for a moment; and, as he was partly concealed by the raised terrace on which the house stood, she only caught a sight of his head and shoulders.

Here ended all information. The old housekeeper had seen no one, and the housemaid declared that she neither could tell how tall the gentleman was, nor could vouchsafe any other particulars in regard to his personal appearance, except that he was a gentleman, she was sure; for he walked like a gentleman. Sir Sidney would fain have forced her into a definition of the walk of a gentleman; but the housemaid

was not to be caught, and took refuge in stupidity, as usual in such cases.

By the time this was over, William Delaware's heat had evaporated, and it was with a smile he asked his father, "Well, sir, who do you think our dear unknown friend is?"

"Why, of course, William, I cannot say who it positively is," replied Sir Sidney; "but it would not surprise me, were I to find that it was your admirable friend Burrel."

"Nor me either!" answered William Delaware. "What do you think, Blanche?"

But Blanche was looking out of the window, with a very red tip to the fair, finely-turned ear that rested on the smooth glossy waves of her rich brown hair. Perhaps she did not hear the question, but certainly she did not answer it; and her brother, though he would fain have said a word or two of kind malice, could he have known how far he might venture without inflicting real pain, would not run the risk.

"I wish, William," said his father, "that you would go down to Emberton and see Mr. Burrel. The circumstances of the proposed arrangement with Lord Ashborough were mentioned more than once in his presence, and if he have heard by any chance of there being a delay on the part of Mr. Tims, he may certainly have taken means to remedy that inconvenience. In fact, I know of no other person at all likely to perform such an act of liberality in this somewhat romantic manner."

Blanche glided out of the room, and her father went on. "Mrs. Darlington, though a very good woman, and not without feeling, does not perform such acts as this. Otherwise, as she came to Emberton, I hear, yesterday, to meet Dr. Wilton and another magistrate about this burning of her house, we might have supposed that she was the lender of the money. Good Dr. Wilton himself could not, I know, command so large a sum. I wish, therefore, you would go and visit Mr. Burrel, and tell him that, while we accept the loan as an obligation, and appreciate his conduct as it should be appreciated, we are desirous of giving him a mortgage upon the property which he has released from so great a burden."

"I will go down almost immediately, sir," replied Captain Delaware; "but, in all the confusion of this morning, I have lost my breakfast, for it seems that the surprise and wonderment of finding the packet detained me till you and Blanche had finished."

The bell was rung, breakfast was again made, and Captain Delaware proceeded somewhat quickly in the task of de-

spatching it, reflecting, in the intervals of a broken conversation with his father, upon all that he would have to say to Burrel—how he might best and most delicately thank him for the kindness and promptitude of the service he had rendered—how he might arrive at the facts of his situation in regard to Blanche; and whether he would be justified in communicating at once to Sir Sidney his cousin's real name, without consulting Beauchamp himself. In the meanwhile, the baronet walked backwards and forwards—now looked out of the window—now talked with his son, feeling that degree of pleasant perturbation, that sort of long swell, which remains after some moment of peculiar agitation is happily over, and the mind is settling down slowly into a calm.

Before his son had finished his breakfast, however, Sir Sidney remarked that there seemed a great many people in the park. "I suppose," he said, "the worthy lawyer has informed the good folks of the town that we are rather more than a thousand a-year richer than we were in the morning; and therefore we may now expect the respectful congratulations of all those who treated us with the greatest degree of contempt while we were poor."

"I will go and kick them out, sir, directly," said Captain Delaware, "if you will allow me to finish this piece of toast."

"I hope you may finish a great many, William," replied his father, "before you begin kicking at all. But there really seems something extraordinary here. There is a whole posse, and here is a chariot driving up the avenue—Dr. Wilton's, I think."

Captain Delaware rose for a moment, looked out of the window, declared the carriage to be certainly Dr. Wilton's, and the personages on foot to be a set of blackguards, who had no business there; and then sat down to his breakfast again, with the intention, as soon as he had concluded, of going forth and sending the gentry, who had now approached close to the house, back to the town without any very flattering expression of regard. He was just depositing his coffee-cup in the saucer, when Dr. Wilton entered the room unannounced, accompanied by another magistrate, and followed by Mr. Peter Tims, with two or three other persons, whose appearance in that place greatly surprised both Sir Sidney and his son.

The baronet advanced, however, and shook his reverend friend by the hand; and Captain Delaware exclaimed, laughing, "Why, my dear Dr. Wilton, I never thought to see you with such a crew, headed by such a rascally boatswain as that behind you. Why, you have got all the constables of Emberton at your back! What is the matter?"

"I am sorry to say, my dear William, that I am come upon a very serious business," replied Doctor Wilton; "although, indeed, the part that regards you, both our good friend here, Mr. Egerton, and myself, look upon as quite ridiculous. Yet the matter is of so very horrible a nature, that it does not admit of a jest; and this person—this gentleman, urges a charge against you, so seriously and plausibly, that we are forced to examine into the matter, though we doubt not that you can clear yourself at once."

"The scoundrel does not pretend to say that I struck him!" cried Captain Delaware, his cheek burning with anger; "I threatened, indeed, and I wish I had put my threat——"

"The charge is a much more serious one than that," said Dr. Wilton, interrupting him; and then turning to his brother magistrate, he said, in a low tone, "Remark his demeanour! I told you it was ridiculous!"

"You had better, however, have the warrant executed," replied the other, in the same low tone. "We can hold the examination here; and if it turn out as you expect, discharge it as soon as the business is over."

"What is the matter, gentlemen?" said Sir Sidney Delaware. "All this seems very strange! Will you be kind enough to explain?"

"Captain Delaware," said Mr. Egerton, "we are here upon an unpleasant duty. You are charged by this person, who is, I am told, Mr. Tims, a lawyer of Clement's Inn, with a very serious crime; and although, from your character and station, Dr. Wilton and myself do not for a moment believe the accusation to originate in anything but error, and are willing to do all to spare your feelings; yet, in pursuit of the ends of justice, we are bound to act towards you as we would towards any other person in the same situation. A charge against you, then, having been made before us, upon oath, we were bound to grant a warrant against you, which must now be executed. The examination, however, can as well take place here as elsewhere; and as this gentleman has declared that he is ready to go into it immediately, we will instantly proceed, not at all doubting that you can clear yourself at once."

Captain Delaware had listened at first with surprise and indignation; but gradually, as the importance of the whole business became strongly impressed upon his mind, he assumed a more serious aspect, and bowing low, in reply to Mr. Egerton's address, he said, gravely, but frankly, "Although I cannot divine what charge that person is about to bring—or rather has brought—against me, yet I thank you, sir, for

the courtesy with which you are inclined to treat me, and of course surrender myself at once. Do not look so shocked, my dear father," he added, turning towards Sir Sidney; "be assured that your son never did an act that he was ashamed to acknowledge in the face of the whole world. But I think you had better leave us; for this business seems likely to be too painful for you."

"Never, never, my dear boy!" replied Sir Sidney. "Never! I am a magistrate also, and should know something of these affairs; and though, of course, I cannot act in your case, I will not leave you while I have life."

A tear rose in Dr. Wilton's eye; but Mr. Egerton beckoned forward the officer charged with the warrant against Captain Delaware, to whom the young gentleman surrendered immediately, merely requiring to be informed of the nature of the crime with which he was charged.

"I object! I object!" cried Mr. Peter Tims. "I will not have the prisoner put upon his guard!"

"You seem strangely ignorant of the fundamental principles of English law, sir, for a person who follows it as a profession," replied Mr. Egerton. "Captain Delaware, you are charged with the murder of a person of the name of Tims, residing at Ryebury, in this neighbourhood."

"Good God!" exclaimed Captain Delaware, with unfeigned horror; "then that is the reason the poor fellow did not bring the money last night."

"Put down that observation, clerk!" said Dr. Wilton to a young man who had followed into the room with the constables, and two or three other persons.

"Let us carry on the matter a little more formally, my dear sir," said Mr. Egerton. "Sir Sidney, with your permission, we will take our seats here. Clerk, place yourself there. Constable, put a chair for Captain Delaware at the bottom of the table—stand back yourself, and keep those other persons back. Captain Delaware, it is customary to warn persons in your present situation against saying anything that may commit themselves. To you I have only to remark, that your examination will of course be taken down, and may hereafter be brought against you."

"You will understand, however," added Dr. Wilton, "that the present investigation is merely instituted by us to ascertain whether this person can bring forward sufficient evidence in support of the accusation, to oblige us to remand you for further examination."

"I shall bring forward sufficient evidence to compel you to commit him," cried Mr. Tims, "however prejudiced you may be in his favour."

"Do not be insolent, sir!" said Mr. Egerton, "or I may find it necessary to punish you in the first instance. Your charge is already made, and we shall proceed with the examination as we judge most expedient ourselves. Remember, Captain Delaware, you are warned against committing yourself."

"I have nothing to conceal, sir, and therefore have no reason to fear saying anything that is true!" replied the young officer. "Pray, proceed."

"Well, then, let me ask," said Mr. Egerton, "when and where you happened to see Mr. Tims—generally known by the name of the miser of Ryebury—for the last time?"

"It was yesterday morning," replied Captain Delaware. "I met him first in the lanes leading to his own house; accompanied him home, and left him there."

"Pray, did any high words pass between you and him, on that occasion?" demanded the magistrate; "and if so, what was the subject of dispute? You are not compelled to answer, unless you like."

"I am sorry to say," replied Captain Delaware, "that there were high words passed between myself and the poor old man. The cause of them was simply that he had agreed to furnish a certain sum of money to pay off an annuity which was pressing heavily upon this estate, and that he failed to perform his promise at the time agreed upon."

"And to obtain which, whether he would or not, you murdered him!" cried Mr. Peter Tims.

Captain Delaware started up, with the fire flashing from his eyes, but instantly resumed his seat, saying, "Am I to be thus insulted, gentlemen?"

"Mr. Peter Tims," said Mr. Egerton, sternly, "if you again interrupt the proceedings, I will have you removed from the room; and if you are insolent," he added, seeing the other about to reply, "I shall equally know how to deal with you."

The lawyer was silent, and Dr. Wilton demanded, "Will you state, Captain Delaware, whether, on your last meeting with the unhappy man, Mr. Tims, you threatened to strike him, or used any violent menaces towards him?"

William Delaware reddened, but he replied at once, "Sorry I am to say, my dear sir, that I did threaten to horsewhip him; but it was upon severe provocation, from the cool insolence with which he informed me that he was not able to keep the promise he had made, the performance of which was of infinite consequence to my family."

"And are you certain, Captain Delaware," demanded Mr. Egerton, "that that was the last time you ever saw this unhappy man?"

"Perfectly certain!" replied the young officer; and then added, after a momentary pause, "I went to his house las night, in order to ascertain whether the money had arrived, but could not obtain admittance. I rang several times without effect."

Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton looked at each other, and the latter then demanded—"Then pray, Captain Delaware, where did you obtain the money which you paid to Mr. Tims here present this morning?"

"I suppose, sir," replied Captain Delaware, with some degree of haughtiness, "that, as the question is evidently intended to entangle me, I might, according to the principle you have yourself laid down, refused to answer; but it is indeed unnecessary to do so; and if the simple truth do not clear me, I can hope for nothing else." He then circumstantially recapitulated the same story which he had that morning related to his father, concerning the receipt of the money.

Mr. Tims laughed scornfully, and Mr. Egerton looked to Dr. Wilton, who, in return, whispered something to him, which seemed to make an immediate impression. "Captain Delaware," he said, "it is fit that I should inform you, that a strong case is made out against you. In the first place, there has been evidence on oath given before us, at the house of this unfortunate man, Mr. Tims, that you were heard to threaten him violently yesterday morning—clerk, hand me the minute of Farmer Ritson's evidence—yes, those are the words! In the next place you were seen going towards his house last night after sunset, and two or three other persons unknown were observed proceeding in the same direction. About that period the deceased was evidently still alive, as his servant, it appears, was sent to Emberton for bill stamps, the written description of which is before us in his own hand. The man has been found murdered, in the very room where he kept his money, as if he had been killed in the act of taking out certain sums from his iron chest. The body of the woman has not been discovered, but a long track of blood down the stairs has pointed the direction in which it was carried, and doubtless it will be found ere long."

Captain Delaware had listened attentively, but not without impatience; for perfect innocence made him feel the charge utterly absurd, and at length he broke forth—"And do you, sir!" he exclaimed, "call it a strong case, that I was heard to threaten an old knavish miser with a horsewhipping, and was seen somewhere in the neighbourhood of his house on the night that he was killed, without any other evidence whatever?"

"Not without any other evidence whatever, Captain Dela-

ware," replied Mr. Egerton, somewhat sharply. "But on a train of circumstantial evidence, sir, very painful for us to contemplate. You mistake the matter, Captain Delaware," he added, in a more kindly tone. "Your previous high character induces us to put the most liberal construction upon everything, and to extend to your case the most calm—nay, the most friendly—consideration that justice will admit, before we even remand you to await the result of the coroner's inquest. Besides the circumstances I have stated, you must remember, that you yourself acknowledge that, up to a late hour last night, you were not possessed of the sum required. By half-past nine this morning, that sum is in your possession. One of the notes before me bears the mark of a forefinger stained with blood; and in the bedroom of the deceased a paper has been found, dated yesterday morning, in which the dates and numbers of some of the notes paid by you this morning, are marked as having been received by post that day. Your account of the manner in which the money came into your hands is somewhat extraordinary—so much so, as to be highly improbable; and I fear, that unless you can in some way explain these circumstances, we shall be bound to commit you at once."

Sir Sidney Delaware hid his face in his handkerchief, and wept. Mr. Tims rubbed his hands with a degree of glee, not at all diminished by the loss of his uncle, and Captain Delaware gazed upon the two magistrates, stupified at finding himself suddenly placed in circumstances so suspicious. There was innocence, however, in the whole expression of his countenance—in the surprise, in the horror, in the bewilderment it betrayed; and Mr. Egerton, who was a shrewd and observing, without being an unfeeling man, saw that such conduct could not be affected, and believed that it could only proceed from a heart devoid of guilt.

"Bethink yourself, my dear sir!" he said, after a short pause, during which he awaited in vain Captain Delaware's answer. "However improbable, I will not believe anything that you have said to be untrue."

"If you did, sir, I could pardon you," replied the young officer, with a glowing cheek; "for, long ere you appeared, I could scarcely prevail upon my own family to believe the tale. How much more, then, might it be doubted by a person who is nearly a stranger to me!"

"Well but, my dear sir!" said Mr. Egerton, more convinced of the prisoner's innocence, by this outbreak of feeling, than he had been before, "can you not account for the fact of the money being so placed in your bedroom?"

Captain Delaware related what had passed in the morning,

and the servants being called, recapitulated their tale; the footman declaring that he had seen no one but Mr. Burrel's man, Harding, in the lanes at the back of the park, and the housemaid swearing that she had seen a stranger on the terrace just after nightfall. Dr. Wilton, at the first sound of Burrel's name, sent off a messenger to his lodging at Emberton, with orders to bring up the landlady, with Harding, and the groom, if the two latter were still there; and in the meanwhile, Mr. Egerton continued the examination, evidently more with a view of giving the prisoner every chance of explaining the suspicious circumstances, than with a wish to find him guilty.

"Now, Captain Delaware," he said, "I am about to put a question to you, which the circumstances, I believe, fully justify. Do you, or do you not, know any one who was likely to perform so extraordinary, and, I must say, foolish an act, as that of placing so large a sum in your chamber, without giving you any notice of his so doing?—I say, have you any suspicion as to who was the person who did so?"

"I certainly have, sir!" replied William Delaware. "And he was not a man to do a foolish act. Circumstances unknown to you, sir, might induce him to do, in the present instance, what he would not have done upon any other motives."

"And pray, sir, who may he be?" demanded the magistrate.

Captain Delaware paused; but replied, after an instant's thought—"My present situation, of course, compels me to be more explicit upon such a subject than I otherwise should be. The person I suspect of having placed the money in my room, is a gentleman who has lately been residing at Emberton, under the name of Burrel, but who may now be named as my cousin, Henry Beauchamp."

Sir Sidney Delaware started up off his chair, but immediately resumed his seat again; and another look of intelligence passed between Mr. Egerton and Dr. Wilton.

"I appeal to Dr. Wilton," added Captain Delaware, "if such a thing be not probable."

"Most probable in his case!" replied Dr. Wilton. "Indeed, more than probable——"

"Pray, sir, are you now acting as a magistrate or as a witness?" demanded Mr. Tims. "If as the latter, I would ask you, whether Mr. Beauchamp did not pass the day at your house yesterday, which I hear in the village that he did, beyond all doubt?"

"Then you have heard, sir, what was not the case!" replied Dr. Wilton.

A long conversation, which was carried on in so low a tone

as to be inaudible to any one but the two magistrates and the clerk, then ensued between Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton; the latter of whom at length said, to the surprise even of Captain Delaware himself, "I do not think, Mr. Tims, that, all things considered, we should be justified in committing the prisoner till after the coroner's jury have sat upon the body. We have determined, sir, to remand him."

Mr. Tims stormed and raved, slapped the table with all the unction of forensic eloquence, and demanded where the magistrates intended to confine the prisoner in the meantime. There was no place of security nearer than the county town, except the cage at Emberton; and he doubted not—he added, with a sneer—that the friendship which the worthy magistrates entertained for the prisoner would prevent him from occupying that lodging.

"Our sense of decency and humanity will do so, at least," replied Mr. Egerton, coolly. "In a word, sir, we do not think that there is sufficient direct evidence before us to commit the accused till the coroner's inquest has sat. The coroner has been already sent for, and the inquest can be held immediately. The jury may themselves like to examine the prisoner; and, therefore, it will be useless to send him to the county town. In order to spare his feelings as much as possible, which of course we wish to do, we have determined, if two of our most active constables can find a room in this house which they judge undoubtedly secure, to leave him here, under their custody. If not, he must be removed to Emberton, and placed in the justice room, though the security of it is doubtful."

In vain the lawyer argued. The justices were determined; and the officers, after spending some time in examining the house, returned, declaring that no room in a prison could be more secure than the prisoner's own bedroom, which was so high above the terrace, that no escape could be effected from the window; and which had but one door, opening into an anteroom, where they could keep watch. Mr. Tims himself was permitted to examine the room; and could not but acknowledge that he was satisfied. The constables received every injunction to be cautious, and Captain Delaware, having been asked whether he had anything further to say, replied that he had not.

"Then you may remove the prisoner!" said Mr. Egerton.

Sir Sidney Delaware staggered up, and caught him in his arms. Captain Delaware pressed his father for a moment to his heart; and saying, in a low but firm voice, "Do not be afraid—I am as innocent as a child of the charge they bring against me!" tore himself away, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

While the examination had been proceeding in the little breakfast-parlour, the ear of Captain Delaware had been more than once struck by a number of voices speaking in the library, from which it opened; and as he was conducted through that apartment, the first sight that presented itself was his sister, Blanche, bathed in tears. She had been prevented from entering the room in which the magistrates sat; but the moment she beheld her brother, she sprang forward, and threw herself into his arms, clinging to his bosom in an agony of distress and tenderness. Captain Delaware kissed her cheek, and bade her be comforted, assuring her that the charge against him was not only false, but perfectly absurd; and that a few hours would set him at liberty again.

"Oh, no! No, no!" cried Blanche. "I see it all, William! It is all part of a plot to ruin us, and they will never be satisfied till we are crushed and disgraced. That Lord Ashborough and his lawyer will work their designs by some means, be assured!"

At that moment Dr. Wilton advanced from the inner room, and withdrew Blanche from the arms of her brother, bidding her take heart; and whispering that he had already sent off a messenger for Mr. Beauchamp, whose presence, he doubted not, would clear up the whole story. Blanche shook her head mournfully, and covered her eyes with her hands, while her brother was led away to his own room. The door was locked on the outside, and the constables, placing themselves in the anteroom, cut off all communication between the young officer and his family, who remained desolate and anxious, amidst the scenes which had lately been so full of calm happiness and enjoyment.

In the meanwhile, Captain Delaware seated himself at the table, in his own room, and endeavoured to bend the whole powers of his mind to the investigation of his own situation in all its bearings. While either in the actual presence of the magistrates, or under the eyes of his own family, he had felt it necessary to repel every thought of real danger, and not to yield one step to apprehension; but now he saw that it was indispensable to look at his situation in the worst point of view, and to admit the utmost extent of the peril in which he stood.

He was innocent! that was one great source of confidence

and expectation, for he believed, and felt sure, that an innocent man had very seldom suffered. But still such things had occasionally taken place, beyond all doubt; and it behoved him to consider whether his own might not be one of those cases in which such an event was likely. As he looked at the evidence against himself, he could not but acknowledge that, as it stood at the present moment, there was a strong presumption of his guilt. He had been seen to threaten the murdered man, in the morning; he had been seen in the neighbourhood of his house, on the night the murder was committed; he had been in known and acknowledged want of the money up to that hour; and then he had suddenly obtained possession of it in a manner of which he could give no probable account. Several of the notes had been certainly in possession of the murdered man a few hours before the crime was committed on his person; and one of them, he had himself remarked, while paying it to the lawyer, appeared stained with blood. "Were I upon a jury," he thought, "what verdict would I return? Guilty, undoubtedly—unless some clear explanation of such suspicious circumstances could be given and substantiated. Now, let me consider what I have to give, and how it can be proved.

"I have nothing but the bare supposition that the money was placed in my room by Henry Beauchamp, or by his servant; and although that surmise may be equal to a certainty in my own mind, it is likely to have little weight with others. Dr. Wilton, too, admits that he set out for London about three o'clock, when the money assuredly was not here! Can I be mistaken in supposing it to have been him? Can Blanche's suspicion be correct, that this is part of a plan to ruin my father and his family for ever?"

"Beauchamp will of course be sent for," he thought; "and, when he comes, it only remains for him to declare that he had nothing to do with the transaction—and my condemnation takes place of course. Good God! a commander in his Majesty's navy to die like a common felon! My name and my family to be branded with infamy for ever! My father to expire of shame within the year; and my poor Blanche, if she survive, to be pointed at for life as the sister of the murderer, William Delaware! Ay!" he thought, more bitterly still, "and Beauchamp will thank his good stars which kept him from such an alliance; and Maria Beauchamp may perhaps blush when she remembers that the murderer was her cousin. But time," he cried, starting up, "time will do me justice, and clear my name; and then she may weep to think how I was wronged, and how she believed it!"

"Time," he still thought, "time will clear my fame, and

do me justice; and in the meanwhile, doubtless, I shall die condemned. Still, it is hard enough to feel that one is innocent, and yet to bear the shame and the punishment of the guilty. I wish to Heaven I could speak with Blanche!" Approaching the door, he knocked somewhat sharply, exclaiming, "Mr. Thomson, I much wish that I could speak with my sister for a few minutes! Can you not grant me such a liberty?"

"Quite impossible, Captain!" replied the chief constable. "I wish to Heaven I dared! I am sure you know that I would do anything I could to help you. But this, you see, is no ordinary job; and though I know well enough you are innocent, yet that fellow, Tims, threatened us so, we dare not for our lives."

"Well, I cannot help it, then!" answered the prisoner, with a sigh. "Do you know whether the coroner is arrived yet?"

"Not yet, sir!" answered the constable, still speaking through the door. "The jury is summoned for five o'clock, I hear."

Captain Delaware looked at his watch. It was just three; and for the long hours that succeeded, he continued in the same frame of mind, torturing himself with all those dreamy miseries that an imaginative and impatient heart calls up constantly to aggravate all the ills of misfortune or disappointment. There is no such terrible tamer of the spirit as solitary confinement; and, ere nightfall, the whole hopes and expectations of William Delaware were completely sunk, and the state of his mind was pure despair.

His dinner, which had been brought in by one of the constables at five, remained untouched; and he listened to every sound, expecting each moment to be called before the coroner; but no summons came. At length, just as night was approaching, he heard a considerable sound of voices in the anteroom; and, starting up, he prepared to go along with the messenger, who, he doubted not, had been despatched for him; but the sound subsided, and, in a minute after, the constable again entered the room.

"You had better take something, really, Captain," said the man, kindly, eyeing the untasted dinner. "There is no use, you know, sir, of letting your heart get down that way."

"I have been expecting to be sent for every minute," replied the prisoner; "and I cannot eat in such a state of anxiety."

"You will not be sent for to-night, Captain," replied the constable.

"Has the coroner sat, then?" demanded Captain Delaware.

"Ay, sir!" was the answer.

"And what is the verdict?" cried the accused, fixing his eyes eagerly upon the officer's face.

"Wilful murder, sir!" answered the constable, shaking his head.

"Against me?" exclaimed the prisoner.

"Even so!" replied the officer, sadly. "Even so!"

Captain Delaware fell back into his chair, and clasped his hands over his eyes, while the man went on trying to comfort him.

"Captain! there is your good old housekeeper, Mrs. Williams, takes on terribly because you will not eat; and she's so pressing to speak with you through the door, to see if she cannot get you to take something, that I have promised her she shall, while the other officer is down at his supper. So, do take something, if it be but to please the old lady!"

"Well, well, I will speak to her when she comes!" answered Captain Delaware, in the same desponding tone; and Mr. Thomson withdrew.

In about five minutes after, he heard the step of the other constable depart, and ere long there was a gentle tap at his door.

"Come in!" was the first reply; but instantly remembering his situation, he approached the door, and demanded, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Master William!" answered the voice of the old housekeeper. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! to think of their accusing you of killing a man—you that were always as gentle as a lamb!"

"Do not speak so loud, Mrs. Williams," said the voice of the friendly constable. "I do not want the other man to hear you. He is a stranger in the place, and of course cannot feel for the old family as I can."

As he spoke, there was a slight noise, as of the key turning round in the lock, which was instantly caught by the quick ears of the constable. "You must not try to go in now, Mrs. Williams," he said; "it is against my strict orders."

"I am not trying to go in," she replied, somewhat crossly. "You would soon pull me out again, if I did. It was only my cap caught against the key, as I was stooping down to ask if he would have the soup. Master William," she continued, again addressing the prisoner, "are you there?—for I must not speak loud, he says. I have such a nice basin of soup for you, if I could but get you to take it."

William Delaware remarked again a slight noise at the keyhole, and thought that the good old lady laid a peculiar em-

phasis on the words, "take it!" He replied, however, "Indeed, Mary, I cannot take anything to-night."

"Pray do!" she said: "pray do! It is the best thing for you by far. Will you really not take it, Master William?"

As she spoke, he perceived the end of a small piece of paper protruded gradually through the keyhole; and it became evident, that the good old housekeeper, standing between the officer and the door, had contrived, without being detected, to insinuate through the aperture some written information from Captain Delaware's family. The prisoner instantly took a step forward, and laying hold of the little roll, drew it completely through, saying aloud, "Well, well! I will take it, then."

"Ah, that is right!" cried the voice of the good old lady, joyfully. "There is a good boy!—do always what you are bid! I will send the soup up as soon as ever it is warm!"

"Do so, and thank you!" replied the prisoner. "Tell Blanche and my father," he added, "that, as I am innocent, I doubt not my innocence will soon appear; and bid them be of good heart."

The old lady bade God bless him, and went away; and as soon as he had heard the constable seat himself again in the anteroom, he opened the paper he had received, and read the contents.

It began in the handwriting of the old housekeeper, and had probably been written in the first instance without consultation with any one else; but below there appeared a few lines from his father, which had evidently been added afterwards.

It began:—"Master William, do get away as fast as you can. Don't stop, for God's sake, to let those wicked people have their will. Remember the trap-door under your bed, where you used to play at hide-and-seek when you were little. Master ordered it to be fastened up long ago; but I had only one nail put in, for what was the use, you know. You can easy get the nail out, I am sure; and there shall be a horse waiting for you at the back park-gate at twelve o'clock to-night, and money and all to take you to foreign parts, till the conspiracy Miss Blanche says is against you can be proved upon them. So, do now, for the love of Heaven!"

Beneath this epistle, his father had written, in a hasty and tremulous hand:—"I sincerely think the above is the best plan you can follow. There is evidently a conspiracy against us; and, as you have been selected for the victim, it is better for you to make your escape while you can, than remain, and risk all that malice, wealth, art, and villany can do against you. Take the road to ——, where there are always foreign

vessels lying. Write to us when you are safe, under cover to Mr. ——, the trustee of your poor mother's little property. Fare you well, my dear boy, and God bless you. S. D."

"I shall leave you the candle, Captain," said the man, "though I believe it is out of rule; and I have a notion that, all things considered, one of us ought to sleep in the room with you; but, as that would not be agreeable to you, I'm sure, we must get the old housekeeper to make us a shake-down in the outer-room."

"I shall not forget your civility, Thomson," said Captain Delaware; "and, as you are quite sure that it is not in my nature to commit such a crime as that with which these fellows charge me, so you may be sure I shall some time have the means of thanking you better, when I have proved my innocence."

"I trust you may, Captain! I am sure you may!" replied the man, heartily; and, wishing him good-night, he left him.

His resolution being now taken, the means of putting it into execution became the next question. He looked round the room, and examined carefully every closet and drawer, in the hopes of finding some implement wherewith to extract the nail that fastened the trapdoor to which the letter referred, and which he well remembered having passed through as a boy, a thousand times ere he went to sea. But his room had been thoroughly searched before he had been confined in it, and neither knife, nor gunscrew, nor tool of any kind, was to be found. "Perhaps I can get it out with my hands," he thought; and, kneeling by his bed, he soon discovered the three boards in the dark oak flooring, that were contrived to play upon a hinge, and thus formed a trapdoor. It was close by the bedside, and, opening back against the edge of the bedstead, would have given him exit at once if he could have found anything with which to extract the nail, or rather nails; for, notwithstanding Mrs. Williams' assertion, there was apparently one in each of the boards. He gazed upon them for a moment in silence, thinking over every article of furniture that the room contained, in the hope of turning some one to the use he desired—but it was in vain; and at length taking a dollar from his purse, he slipped it partly between the boards, merely to see whether they were or were not strongly fastened down.

To his great surprise, they moved up easily by the effort he made, as far as the crown-piece could be brought to act as a lever. He immediately applied his hand to keep them in that position, and then slipping the silver a little further down, raised them still higher. Another effort enabled him

to interpose his fingers between the trapdoor and the flooring; and it became evident at once, on a closer examination, that the single nail which had in reality fastened it down, had been lately pushed out—in all probability from below. The hole, which it had left in the beam, was still fresh; and Captain Delaware now perceived that what he had taken for two other nails, were, in fact, merely nail-heads, driven in to make the several boards resemble each other. Gently replacing the trapdoor, he returned to the table, and sat down to indite a clear statement of the reasons which induced him to effect his escape without awaiting the event of his trial. Into this he wove the notes he had before written concerning the previous conduct of his accuser, and he boldly declared that he looked upon Lord Ashborough as the instigator, and the lawyer as the agent, in a premeditated scheme to destroy his family. To bear upon this point, he brought all the circumstances within his knowledge, and all the arguments he could make use of; and, after avowing his conviction that nothing but time would establish his innocence, he folded the paper, and addressed it to Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton. Before this was concluded, it was near eleven o'clock, and the only light that was allowed him was beginning to burn low. In order, therefore, to take advantage of it while it lasted, he approached the trap, and was about to raise it, when it suddenly occurred to him that, in the letter he had just written, it might seem that he had shifted his ground of defence, since he had avowed in the morning that he believed Henry Beauchamp to have placed the money in his chamber; and, turning back to the table, he sat down to explain that circumstance, and to desire that Beauchamp might be called upon to state whether he had done so or not. Luckily, as it happened, he did so; for the moment after, with scarcely any noise, the door of his room opened, and the head of the other constable, who was a stranger in the town, appeared, looking in as if from some excited suspicion.

"Oh, good night, Captain!" he said; "I did not know whether you were asleep."

"Not yet," replied Captain Delaware, calmly; "but, as you are not asleep either, I wish you would get me another light, and some sealing-wax, as I want this letter to go early to-morrow to the magistrates."

"It's no use, Captain, I am afraid," replied the constable. "Howsomdever, it shall go—but the boy as takes it must be paid, you know."

"There is half a sovereign to pay him with," replied the prisoner; "keep the rest for your own trouble—and get me another light and some sealing-wax."

"Why every one is a-bed but me, and I was just a-going," replied the man. "But I will see." So saying, he departed, but returned in a few minutes with another light, and a stick of sealing-wax; and finding the prisoner still writing, he left him, telling him that he was just going to bed, but if he would push the letter under the door, it should be sent the first thing next morning.

Captain Delaware gladly saw him depart, and ere he had concluded, and sealed his letter, heard unequivocal signs of one at least of his jailers having fallen into a sound sleep. He listened anxiously, again and again, but all was silent in the house, except the dull, hard breathing of the constables in the anteroom. It was now half-past eleven, and the hour at which the horse was to be at the back park gate was so near, that it became necessary to execute his design with promptitude; yet there was something painful in it altogether, which made him linger a moment or two in his father's house, calling up its host of memories, and evoking from the dim night of time the sweet and mournful spirit of the past.

He felt, however, that it was all in vain—that such thoughts but served to weaken him; and taking up the light, he approached his bedside, and once more raised the trapdoor. The little ladder stood ready, just as it used to stand in the days of his childhood, and descending slowly, step by step, holding the light in one hand, and supporting the trapdoor in the other, he reached the last step but two or three, and then suffered the door to close over his head. The narrow cavity in which he now was, filled the centre of one of those internal buttresses, if I may use the term, into the masonry of which one of the back staircases of the old mansion was joisted. It was about six feet square in the inside, and at the first floor beneath his own, afforded a sort of landing-place, on which the ladder rested. Thence, again, a more solid stair of stone wound down to a sort of vault under the terrace, in which was placed the great draw-well that supplied the house with the water principally used by the family.

When the trapdoor was closed, William Delaware, who was descending backwards, turned to look how many steps intervened between his feet and the ground, when, to his surprise, he found that the last step but one of the ladder, old and rotted by the damp, was broken through the middle, and offered, in the fresh yellow surface of the fracture, incontestable proofs that the way had been trod very lately by some other foot than his own. Over the floor of the landing-place, too, which that thriftless housewife, Neglect, had left covered with a thick coat of dust, might be traced three distinct steps from the mouth of the staircase; and the young fugitive

at once saw that the way which had served to introduce the money into his chamber was now before him. That being the case, he felt that if his suspicions in regard to Mr. Tims were true, the outlet might and would probably be watched; and, consequently, he determined to examine the whole ground cautiously before he attempted to go out into the park.

Down the stairs, which were likewise covered with dust, he could trace the same alternate step coming up and going down again, but no other footmarks were to be seen, and it was evident that but one person had passed that way for years. The doors, however, which at different parts of the descent had been placed to guard that means of entrance, were now wide open; and, descending to the vault or cellar in which the well was placed, William Delaware put out the light behind a pile of old bottles, that nearly covered the foot of the stairs, and then cautiously approached the door, underneath which a narrow line of pale moonlight was visible.

The door was sometimes padlocked, and it seemed so closely fastened, that the young sailor's heart began to fail him as he approached; but carelessness or the good old housekeeper had left no obstacles there; and, as he drew it slowly towards him, it yielded to his hand without a sound, exposing to his sight, once more, all the fine wild park scenery at the back of the mansion, lighted up by as glorious a moon as ever looked out through the blue sky upon the fair face of earth. For full five minutes he paused and turned his eyes in every direction, but nothing was to be seen which could cause him the slightest apprehension; and throwing the door wider open, he considered which would be the nearest and best covered way towards the gate at which the horse was to be stationed. At the western angle of the park, a sweep of old trees came within a hundred yards of the house, and thence a path wandered in amongst some large hawthorns and two or three splendid larches, leading down towards the glen in which the Prior's Well was situated. The gate which he wished to reach, indeed, lay somewhat to the east; but in order to proceed straight thither, he would have been obliged to cross a wide open piece of grassy ground, on which the moon was shedding a light nearly as clear as that of day, aud which was commanded by every window in that side of the building.

Gliding along, then, under the terrace, and bending—so that his head might not appear above it, he reached the opposite angle of the building, one of the old octagon towers of which threw out a long shadow, that fell upon the nearest trees, and mingled with the obscurity beneath them. Following this dark track, William Delaware walked quickly on,

gained the shelter of the wood, and then, threading the well-known paths with a step of light, reached the dim glen which he had trod so lately with Burrel and his sister, and only paused, with the burning thirst of intense agitation, beside the old fountain, where, in the braggadocio spirit of a heart at ease, he had dared them to drink the icy waters of indifference.

"I may drink now myself, indeed!" he thought, as he filled the iron cup; but still he paused in raising it to his lips —gave his heart one moment to dream—conjured up as idle a hope as ever crossed the mind of man, and then tossed the cup back again into the well. And I should like to know if all the human race were brought, one by one, to the side of a fountain of such virtues as that—without a mortal eye to look on, and arm their vanity against their affections—if there would be one being found in all the world so hapless—so hopeless—so without one sweet drop of feeling or of fancy—so destitute of life's ties and the heart's yearnings—as to raise the chilly waters irrevocably to their lips!

CHAPTER XXII.

It is impossible to describe the joy and satisfaction with which the excellent people at Emberton had heard that Mr. Tims, the old miser at Ryebury, had been murdered. I do not, of course, mean to say, that every one in the whole town had those enlarged and general views which made them take in at once all the infinite advantages, both moral and physical, which that event was likely to afford them. Some, indeed, only calculated upon the overflowing and inexhaustible source of bustle, excitement, surmise, and gossip, which was thus opened to them. Some fixed their thoughts upon the renown that Emberton would acquire throughout the world, as the place where the dreadful murder was committed, and others calculated upon wealth and emolument, from the number of visitors that it would bring to see the place. But only a few, of more vast and comprehensive minds, saw all these particulars in one general view, and rubbed their hands in great anticipations, as, sharing in the sweet excitement of the moment, they talked over the murder with their neighbours, and added many bright touches from their own fancy to ornament the bloody deed.

The first news of the event that reached Emberton had been conveyed by Farmer Ritson's hind, who supplied the old

miser with his quotidian pennyworth of milk, and who had discovered the deed on applying in vain for admission. He alarmed his master, whose house was half a mile distant, and the good farmer instantly sent the intelligence to Emberton. The messenger's arrival took place just five minutes after Mr. Tims, junior, had driven through the town on his way to the mansion at the park; and as both Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton, the nearest magistrates, had passed the preceding evening and night at Emberton, inquiring into some suspicious circumstances connected with the burning of Mrs. Darlington's house, they were instantly called from their breakfast, and proceeded to examine into this fresh crime, which was destined to illustrate the annals of the neighbourhood.

They found the house at Ryebury already surrounded by a number of people; and from amongst them various persons stepped forward to offer some little item of testimony; but an unexpected visitor soon appeared in the person of the lawyer, who, on leaving the park, in not the most placable humour, ordered the postboy to drive to his uncle's house, and arrived just as the magistrates were about to leave the premises. No sooner did he hear of the event, than he determined, if possible, to involve the family of Sir Sidney Delaware in the consequences, and entered into an examination of the circumstances, which soon not only furnished him with the means of doing so, but also really convinced him that Captain Delaware was guilty of the crime that he proposed to impute to him. He at once laid his charge, and related the circumstances of his late transaction with Sir Sidney Delaware's family in his own particular way. He would fain, indeed, have involved the father too in the accusation he brought against the son; but his own clerk, and the sheriff's officer, distinctly stated before the magistrates that it had been evident throughout, that Sir Sidney had not been aware, on their first arrival, that his son was in possession of the money necessary to pay the debt; and, for fear of spoiling a very hopeful case against Captain Delaware, the lawyer was obliged to abandon all charge against the baronet.

Early the next morning, however, just as the chaise which was to convey the prisoner to the county town was about to set out for his father's house, and as all the people of Emberton were preparing to turn out, and stare at him as he passed, a buzzing rumour began to spread abroad that Captain Delaware had escaped in the night.

The magistrates were not inactive; warrants, horses, and constables were despatched in all directions, and both Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton, well knowing the blame that would attach to themselves, returned to the mansion to investigate

by what means the prisoner had escaped. The constables in whose charge he had been left, and the room which he had occupied, were first examined. The two men declared upon oath, that no one had been admitted to the accused but themselves, since he had been remanded—that they had both slept in the anteroom—that the door had been locked all night—that the window was far too high to afford the means of evasion—and that they had both seen and spoken to Captain Delaware as late as eleven the preceding night. The inferior constable at the same time handed the fugitive's letter to Dr. Wilton, who opened and read it, while Mr. Egerton made the first superficial examination of the room; and, as his fellow magistrate was about to institute a more rigorous investigation, the clergyman exclaimed, "Stay, stay,—Mr. Egerton, this letter concerns us both, and in it William Delaware alludes, in some measure, to the method of his intended escape.

"See here! He says the officers are entirely guiltless of it, as it is by a passage they are not acquainted with."

"Then there must be some private entrance," said Mr. Egerton.

"I dare say there is," answered Dr. Wilton; "but this letter, in many points, throws some new light upon the subject. Read it! Read it! and, at all events, let us, as far as we can, do the poor boy justice. Read it, my dear sir!"

Mr. Egerton took it to the window, and read it attentively over. He then gave the letter back to Dr. Wilton, saying, "He makes out a good case against his accuser; but I am afraid, my dear doctor, that it will not screen himself. However, on every account—for charity's sake, and the sake of mere justice, I will of course exert myself to the utmost—that is to say, quietly—quietly you know, for the matter is nearly out of our hands—but I will exert myself to the utmost to discover every fact connected with the charge. In the meantime, we must do our duty, and endeavour to recover our prisoner. Let us examine the walls."

"First examine the floor," said Dr. Wilton. "Sliding panels have not been to be found since the epoch of Udolpho; but trapdoors are to be met with in all these old houses."

The hint was instantly complied with; and the trapdoor was discovered at once, together with its communication with the park. Nothing further, however, could be made of this fact. The way the fugitive had taken, remained still undiscovered; and the only effect which their investigation produced upon the minds of the two magistrates was, that each perceived at once that the means which Captain Delaware had taken to make his escape might very well have served another person for the purpose of placing the money in his

chamber unseen; and thus his tale acquired a degree of probability which it had not before possessed.

When the examination was concluded, as far as it could be carried at the time, and every necessary measure for overtaking the fugitive had been put in train for execution, Mr. Egerton went back to Emberton to confer with the coroner, who was hourly expected to return to that little town, in order to see the prisoner dispatched to the county jail. Dr. Wilton, in the meanwhile, laying aside his magisterial capacity, proceeded, as a friend and a clergyman, to visit Sir Sidney Delaware and his daughter. He found them, as he had expected, depressed in the extreme, and saw that they were naturally in a high state of nervous anxiety in regard to Captain Delaware's safety. At first there was a degree of painful embarrassment in the whole deportment of Sir Sidney Delaware, which made him treat even Dr. Wilton with no small haughtiness and reserve. But the good clergyman came to console and to soothe; and he persevered with all those kindly and feeling attentions, which are sure ultimately to win their way to an amiable heart, however much the road thither may be obstructed by the pride of undeserved shame, or the reckless repulsiveness of bitter disappointment.

When he found Sir Sidney unwilling to listen, impatient of consolation, or heedless of conversation, he turned to Blanche, and won her into the innocent manœuvre of whiling her father from his bitterer thoughts. Gradually the feelings of the baronet relaxed: he was brought more and more to speak of his own sorrows, and of his son's unhappy fate; and though a tear or two forced themselves through his eyelids, his griefs and even his apprehensions—as is sometimes the case—were partly lost as they were poured forth into a friendly ear.

We must do justice to all, however. Dr. Wilton was not the only friend who came to soothe and console the unhappy family at Emberton Park; and the person who next appeared was certainly one whom they did not expect to see. It was Mrs. Darlington, who had lately taken a house at the distance of about ten miles. After spending a part of the preceding day at Emberton, she had returned to her dwelling, in no small horror at the charge which she heard had been brought against her young friend, William Delaware.

Mrs. Darlington was not without her foibles and absurdities, but withal she had a far greater share of real goodness of heart, and of the milk of human kindness, than generally falls to the lot of that amphibious class called very good sort of people. It must also be remarked, that though she was

in no degree very brilliant, and only made herself ridiculous by the smattering of pretty accomplishments which she possessed, yet there was a certain rectitude of understanding about her, which, in early years, taking the form of tact, enabled her to assume at once the tone of a society above the rank in which she was born; and which, in after-life, had often guided her to just conclusions, when people without half her little weaknesses, and who pretended to ten times her abilities, were all in the wrong.

In the present instance, no sooner did she hear of the accusation against Captain Delaware, than, from her previous knowledge of his character, she pronounced it at once to be perfect nonsense; and when Dr. Wilton informed her that he and Mr. Egerton had remanded the young officer on suspicion, she merely asked, "How they could be so foolish?" The coroner's inquest produced no other effect. She still pronounced it all nonsense together; and quietly declared to her maid that she was sure it would ultimately be found that the people who had murdered the poor old man were the very same who had set fire to her house, and carried off her plate.

Her resolution was taken; and, stepping lightly into her carriage, she ordered the coachman to drive to Emberton Park.

It is not impossible that on her arrival she might have been denied admittance—for just inasmuch as one never knows all the coldness of the general world till one tries it, one does not know the kindness of the exceptions either—but, without any questions, she walked out of the carriage, and, tripping across the hall with a step a good deal too juvenile, she entered the library unannounced.

Sir Sidney bowed with stately formality; but Blanche, who understood the whole business better, exclaimed, while the bright tears rose in her eyes, "Oh, Mrs. Darlington, this is very kind of you, indeed!"

"Not at all, my dear Blanche!" replied Mrs. Darlington, in her usual quick, but little meaning manner. "Where is your brother? I am resolved to see him, and tell him how foolish I think all the magistrates of the county have grown together. Beg your pardon, Dr. Wilton; but it is true, indeed!"

"You cannot see him, madam, I am afraid," replied Dr. Wilton, gravely; "for he has made his escape from confinement."

"I am very glad to hear it," she replied. "You surely would not have had him stay in a nasty filthy prison for two

or three weeks, because a great rogue chose to accuse him of a crime nobody believes he committed. I am very glad to hear it, indeed!"

The good lady then paused for a moment; and perceiving that, although her avowal of disbelief in regard to Captain Delaware's guilt had been not a little pleasing to his father, Sir Sidney still remained sad and depressed, she turned to him, kindly saying, "Come, come, Sir Sidney, I will not have you look so gloomy. You are as careworn as if your son were really guilty; and as we all know very well that he is not, you should make yourself quite sure that he will easily be able to cause his innocence to appear. But I have laid out a little scheme for you and Blanche. I have nobody staying with me in my new house, and the place is quite quiet. You will do nothing here but grow dull and melancholy, and I will have you get into the chariot with me, and come away and spend a week or two till all this is settled."

Although Sir Sidney Delaware felt that the invitation was most kind, and in his own dwelling experienced that sickening disgust which one feels towards all once-loved things, when some fatal change has poisoned them with bitter associations, yet he declined Mrs. Darlington's offer on his own part, though he much pressed his daughter to accept it. Blanche, however, refused to leave her father; and the matter would have ended thus, had not Mrs. Darlington discovered that one great motive in Sir Sidney's desire to remain at his own dwelling, at least for that night, was to hear the first news brought by the messengers dispatched to intercept his son.

As soon as she found how much weight this had upon him, she proposed to go forward with Dr. Wilton to Emberton, and there hear all that had been done in her own business: after which, she said, she would return at six o'clock for Sir Sidney and his daughter, who must have received tidings from the three county towns to which officers had been dispatched.

Some slight difficulties having been discussed and overcome, this plan was agreed to. Mrs. Darlington and Dr. Wilton departed; and the fact that Mrs. Darlington had visited the ruined family at Emberton having been ascertained by the appearance of her carriage rolling down the avenue from the house, threw the town into a state of agitation which might have afforded matter of envy to the Arch-Agitator himself.

In the meanwhile, the various messengers charged with the warrants against Captain William Delaware proceeded towards their destinations. It may be only necessary to follow one of them, however; as all the rest, being sent in

various wrong directions, might have gone onward in a direct line till they met at the antipodes, without setting eyes upon William Delaware. The one, then, who was directed to ride with all speed to the seaport town of ——, and having got his warrant backed by the proper authorities, to search for and take the person of the accused, arrived in that place at about two o'clock of the afternoon; and, finding that no less than five foreign vessels had sailed that day at high water, which took place at eight of the clock, he proceeded, as he had been directed, to inquire at the offices of all the foreign vice-consuls what passports had been granted during the morning.

The consuls and their clerks were as civil as possible, and the names and descriptions were read over to him; but the poor man might as well have been in Babel, such a confused multitude of unchristianlike Christian names were pronounced in his ears. His next attempt was at the descriptions; but he found that, during that one morning, people of all colours and complexions, of all ages and sizes, of all features and professions, had sailed for foreign parts, or obtained their passports, which was quite as good; and therefore, bewildered and in despair, he gave up the search; and having committed his charge to the constables of the place, once more mounted and returned to Emberton.

These tidings were balm to the hearts of Sir Sidney and Blanche Delaware, but were not quite so pleasing to the people of Emberton, who next to a murder enjoyed a hanging—which, indeed, is generally much the same thing. Another messenger, however, arrived about the same time, who brought news which somewhat diverted their attention. This was the man who had been sent the day before to London, by Dr. Wilton, in search of Mr. Beauchamp, and who was a shrewd, intelligent, fellow, not likely to miss the track of any one he sought for. But the tidings he brought back imported, that Mr. Beauchamp had never reached his house in town; and that, along the whole line of road, no person resembling him had either fed a horse, taken a postchaise, mounted a stage, or entered an inn for the last four days.

Every one opened their eyes; and the people of Emberton all went to bed with the consolatory reflection that Mr. Beauchamp, or rather Mr. Burrel, as they termed him, must undoubtedly have been murdered also. Dr. Wilton was himself uneasy. Sir Sidney Delaware said that the absence of Henry Beauchamp was most unfortunate on many accounts; but Blanche turned deadly pale when she heard the tidings, and the vague apprehensions by which they were

accompanied; and it would require no great skill in the book of the human heart to read the silent commentary that went on in her own bosom, on the unexplained absence of one she dearly loved.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Exactly three days after the arrival of Mr. Peter Tims at Emberton, and the discovery of his uncle's murder, the Right Honourable the Earl of Ashborough was sitting at his breakfast-table, in his house of Parmouth Hall, in the county of ——.

At one end of the table sat the Earl, with his whole person in high preservation, just as it came from the hands of his valet. At the other end sat Maria Beauchamp, his niece, in all the full blow of youth and beauty, fashion and good taste. By the side of Miss Beauchamp sat two gentlemen, the Honourable Colonel ——, and Mr. ——, whose names are not worth the trouble of writing, as I never intend to mention them again. Suffice it that they were guests of Lord Ashborough's; the first being a gentleman who, the noble lord thought, would do very well for his niece, and the second a gentleman who thought the noble lord's niece would do very well for him. Maria differed from both; and, in short, thought very little of the two personages at all; though the one poured a continual stream of idleness into her ear which amused her, and the other made love by being profoundly silent, which amused her as much.

"Either we have breakfasted early, or the post is late," said Lord Ashborough; and one of the other gentlemen was replying something quite as significant, when a servant brought in the post-bag, and delivered it formally into his lordship's hands. Lord Ashborough immediately distributed the letters and newspapers; and as breakfast was by this time nearly over, and the after humdrum commencing, each gentleman put his letters in his pocket, and opened his newspaper.

"Hem!—Hem!" said the Colonel, running his eye over the columns—"Hem! Horrid murder! We will keep that for a bonne bouche, I think. What are funds?"

"Hem!—Hem!" said Mr. ——. "Hem—Horrid murder!—Hem!—'Pon my honour, Colonel, the Draper has won the match against the Grand Signor!"

"Ha!" said Lord Ashborough, "Ha! the French, I see,

have persuaded the English that they have not the slightest intention of keeping possession of Algiers—and the English believe them. Let us see what will be the case this time three years—Ha! Horrid murder! Good God!—his throat cut from ear to ear!—Let us see—Coroner's inquest—Wilful murder against—Why, Maria, here is a cousin of ours been committing murder!—He will be hanged to a certainty, my love; and you will be obliged all the winter to wear deep mourning for his offences."

"And pray, sir, who is the gentleman?" demanded Miss Beauchamp. "You know I have so many cousins, and uncles, and such distant relations, that I cannot be expected to remember them all, even when one of them commits a murder."

"Oh! it is very possible so careless a young lady may have forgot him!" replied Lord Ashborough, somewhat piqued at the tone of her answer; "but you have seen him within this month—it is Captain William Delaware—the son of the man at Emberton, who has been cutting the throat of an old miser at—at—at—a place called Ryebury—I think it is."

Miss Beauchamp turned very pale, but, without reply, raised the coffee-cup towards her lips. Ere it reached them, however, it dropped from her hand, and dashed some of the china to pieces by its fall, while the young lady herself sank back, fainting, in her chair, much to the horror and consternation of every one present.

Lord Ashborough started up, and advanced to his niece's assistance; Mr. —— kneeled by her side, and supported her head; while Colonel ——, who was a tall stiff man, rose up, like the geni coming out of the copper vessel—that is to say, by degrees—and rang the bell.

Miss Beauchamp was conveyed speedily to her own room; and the excellent Colonel exclaimed, "Why, Ashborough, this murder which your cousin has committed, seems to affect Miss Beauchamp more than yourself!"

"I had forgot," replied Lord Ashborough, "that she and her brother were almost brought up with those Delawares in their childhood. As to myself, the matter does not affect me at all, Colonel—I always thought that some catastrophe of the kind would take place. The father—who was both at school and at college with me—was always one of those violent, ruthless, unprincipled men, on whose conduct you could never calculate; and as he was generally in scrapes and difficulties, you know, temptation might assail him at any moment. The son seemed, from the little I have ever seen of him, a boy of the same disposition. Heaven knows," he added, with an air of modest candour, "I acted in as liberal a manner as possible

towards them! It was only the other day that I accepted a mere trifle, in lieu of an annuity of two thousand a-year which I held, payable on their estates."

"Scamps!" said the Colonel, walking towards the window. "One never makes anything of scamps. When one has any poor relations—and I suppose every one has some—the best way is to cut them at once. One never makes anything of scamps!"

"Mr. Tims, my lord, waiting in the library," said a servant, entering, just as the Colonel concluded his sensible, comprehensive, and charitable observation.

"Not the ghost of the murdered man, I hope!" cried Mr. ——, who had been reading the report of the coroner's inquest.

"No; but the body of his nephew, I suppose," replied Lord Ashborough. "You had better try the billiard-room, gentlemen, as the day is so bad;" and he proceeded to the library, where he was awaited by Mr. Peter Tims, dressed in what the newspapers call a suit of decent mourning, with a countenance made to match, according to the tailor's term.

Lord Ashborough nodded, and Mr. Tims bowed low as they met; and the peer, letting himself sink into an easy chair, began the conversation by saying, "I suppose, Mr. Tims, I must condole with you on your uncle's death?"

"I have much need of condolence on many accounts, my lord," replied the lawyer; "but I have one happiness, which is, that while your lordship is pleased to condole with your humble servant, he has an opportunity of congratulating you."

"Why, indeed, things seem to have turned out luckily," replied Lord Ashborough; "but I am not yet half informed of what has occurred—all I know is from a brief account in the newspapers."

"If your lordship is at liberty," said the lawyer, "I will explain the whole;" and he forthwith set to work, and recounted all the principal events which had happened since he last left Lord Ashborough; contriving, however, to take almost as much credit to himself for all that had happened, as if he had cut his uncle's throat himself, on purpose to ruin the family of Sir Sidney Delaware.

Lord Ashborough listened, and smiled with triumph, as Mr. Tims, pandering to his malignity, dwelt upon the agony of Sir Sidney Delaware, and the pain and shame of his gallant son—upon the inevitable ruin that must overtake their whole race—and upon the probable consequences to the unfortunate baronet's health. The smile, however, soon faded away; and, strange to say, that though hatred to Sir Sidney Delaware had been the predominant passion of Lord Ashborough's existence,

though the knowledge that he was leading a life of comparative poverty had been one of his greatest pleasures, and the hope of ruining him utterly an object that the Earl had never lost sight of—yet now that it was all accomplished—that it was done—that he was trodden under his feet, and presented to his eyes heartbroken and desolate, ruined and disgraced, the joy passed away in that evanescent smile of triumph—the delight lasted but a moment, and left a vacancy in his desires.

Why it was so, we cannot be called upon to prove. It is a fact in the heart's natural history, and that is all that we have to do with it. It might be, indeed, that Othello's occupation was gone; and that Lord Ashborough, in accomplishing his purpose, had dried up a source of thought and gratification. It might be, that he was like Bruce at the fountains of the Nile—that all which had lured him on, through a dangerous and intricate way, was obtained; and that he had nothing to lead him further, or to guide him back. It might be that, as usual, conscience took advantage of the sudden lassitude of satiety, to smite the heart, for the very gratifications that were palling upon the appetite.

"Well, Mr. Tims! Well!" he said at length. "All this is very fortunate. But, pray, may I ask how is it that you lay claim to so much subject of condolence? If I have understood you right, your uncle's death could be no matter of very inconsolable grief to you—though, doubtless, you might have preferred another manner."

"No, my lord, no!" replied Mr. Tims. "It is not that at all. He was an old man—a very old man—one would have thought that death had forgot him—and, to tell the truth, it was perhaps as well for him to die a quick as a lingering death; and I hear, when the carotid artery is cut, as it was in his case, a man cannot suffer above a second or two. But as I was saying, my lord, it was not either of his death or of the manner that I was thinking, but the murderer must have carried away full twelve thousand pounds in money, besides the sum destined to pay your lordship's note——"

"Which, by the way, I hope you have paid into the hands of my banker?" interrupted Lord Ashborough, whose first thought was, of course, of himself.

"Why, not yet, my lord—not yet!" replied the attorney; "the law has yet to decide to whom it belongs, my lord."

"How, sir!" cried Lord Ashborough, reddening; "to whom can it belong but to me? Was it not paid to you on my account?"

"Beg pardon, my lord! Beg pardon!" replied Mr. Tims. "But, whichever way it goes, your lordship cannot be a loser. If it be proved, as it can be proved, that the money was stolen

from my uncle, the payment to you of course is null, and the money belongs to me, as sole heir of the late Mr. Tims of Ryebury. But then, my lord—hear me, my lord, I beg—the whole transaction with Sir Sidney Delaware is null also, and you will be able to recover at common law!"

Lord Ashborough's face again lighted up, and it is very possible that the thought of pursuing his game still further, and hunting it to the death, might add not a little to his placability. "We must have counsel's opinion as to the best means to be employed," he said. "This young ruffian, you tell me, has escaped, and of course the prosecution must drop, unless he can be apprehended."

"Oh, no, my lord!" answered Mr. Tims. "That does not follow at all. There are, indeed, various modes of proceeding, on which it would be advisable to consult some common-law barrister; but in the meantime, the money is quite secure—so much so, indeed, that if your lordship likes it to be paid into your banker's——"

"Why, Mr. Tims," said Lord Ashborough, thoughtfully, "I think it might be as well, you know."

"Well, my lord, I am quite ready to do so," answered the lawyer, "on your making over to me your claims against Sir Sidney Delaware, and his estate of Emberton."

Lord Ashborough started. "No, no!" he cried. "No!—at all events, we will speak of that hereafter. Cannot a bill of outlawry be pursued against this young man—and ought he not to be dismissed from his Majesty's service? I have a great mind to return to town, and see about the whole business, Mr. Tims. I daresay I can get rid of these two men who are staying here, by the day after to-morrow; and, in the meantime, you had better go back to Emberton, and urge the pursuit as actively as possible. It is not probable that he can have got out of the country so soon! Why do you not send for officers from Bow Street?"

"They are already on the scent, my lord," replied the man of law; "and I doubt not that they will catch him ere he gets far. Murder is a crime which all civilised nations will agree in punishing—and as to the money, my lord——"

"Oh, I doubt not it is safe!" replied Lord Ashborough. "When I come to town, we must take counsel as to the best method of recovering it, as speedily as possible, from Sir Sidney Delaware."

"It is quite safe, depend on it!" answered Mr. Tims. "I was only going to say, that I am likely to be the only loser in this business; as the twelve thousand pounds are, I am afraid, lost for ever."

"I hope not, Mr. Tims," replied the Earl; "and if they be,

we must endeavour to make it up to you some other way. I do not, of course, mean to say that I can take upon me to pay the money, as you see I am likely to be a loser by the whole transaction myself."

"I think not, my lord, indeed," replied the lawyer. "Beg your lordship's pardon; but I think you are likely to be a great gainer."

"How so, sir?" demanded the peer, with open eyes. "I gain nothing, and lose at least the law expenses."

"Why, my lord," replied the lawyer, "I think, in default of issue male on the part of Sir Sidney Delaware, you stand next in the entail; now, if we can convict this young man who has committed the murder, you, of course, succeed."

"Ay! but suppose we cannot catch him," cried the Earl, his face brightening at the thoughts of the reversion.

"Perhaps we can do without, my lord," answered Mr. Tims. "I am much mistaken if, upon due cause, the law, deprived of the power of dealing real death, will not pronounce a criminal legally dead; and I think that, were I certain I should not be a loser, I could bring forward a sufficient case to insure that result.'

"Mr. Tims," said Lord Ashborough, solemnly, laying his hand with a dignified gesture upon a book that lay before him —"Mr. Tims, I can assure you that no one who wishes me well shall ever lose a farthing by me. I think you must know the fine—I might say the fastidious—sense of honour which I entertain; and I promise you upon my word, that if you succeed in carrying through the very just and reasonable design you propose, and establish me as heir of entail to the Emberton property, I will make you full compensation for whatever loss you may have sustained in the course of this business."

"Say no more, my lord!" replied Mr. Tims; "we will find means either to catch and hang him at once, or to cut him off from performing any legal act; and in the meantime—as life is always uncertain—I will, with your lordship's permission, draw up a little document for your lordship to sign, purporting that you will, on your succession to the Emberton estate, indemnify me for the losses I have sustained by the robbery of my uncle's house."

Already Lord Ashborough began to repent of his liberal promise, and to consider whether he could not have done quite as well without the agency of Mr. Tims; but, as it appeared that the chief proofs of Captain Delaware's guilt were in the lawyer's hands, he thought it better to adhere strictly to his engagement, and therefore signified his assent.

"Of course, my lord," continued the lawyer, "you will

find it necessary to proceed against Sir Sidney Delaware immediately, either at common law for the recovery of the sum agreed to be paid by bill, and which cannot be considered as paid, the money wherewith it was satisfied having been stolen; or else to proceed by petition in the Court of Chancery, in order to recover possession of the original annuity deed, the authenticated copy of which is in my possession, praying also that the rents of the Emberton estate may be paid into court, till such time as judgment be pronounced."

The lawyer spoke these hard purposes in a tone of significance, which would have been an insult to any one with whose inmost thoughts he was not so well acquainted as he was with those of Lord Ashborough; but the Earl heard him with a meaning smile, and replied, "Why really, Mr. Tims, you seem inclined to be rather hard-hearted towards this Sir Sidney Delaware."

"Your lordship would not have me very tender towards a man whose son has murdered my only relation," replied the lawyer; "and besides, law has nothing to do with tenderness; and as your lordship's agent, I am bound to suggest what I think the best legal means of protecting your interests."

"Certainly, certainly!" answered the Earl. "Far be it from me to blame you, my good sir. Follow which plan you judge best—both, if you please!"

"Both be it then, my lord!" replied Mr. Tims, rubbing his hands at the interminable prospect which the case held out, of pleas and papers without end—an universe of parchment, and a heaven of red tape. "Both be it then, my lord! There is not the slightest reason that we should not proceed in both courts at once, to make all sure; and if, before two months are over, Sir Sidney Delaware be not as completely beggared as ever man was, the English law will be very much changed—that is all that I can say—unless, indeed," he added thoughtfully, "your lordship's worthy nephew come to his aid, marry Miss Delaware, and advance money to defend her father."

"No fear!" replied Lord Ashborough. "He will not marry her, depend upon it."

"Why, my lord, I am afraid," said Mr. Tims; "that is to say, I have heard it very strongly reported in Emberton, that he did propose to Miss Delaware and that she refused him, not knowing who he was. She and her father are now staying with the lady at whose house she first met Mr. Beauchamp; they are very likely to meet again—he to declare his real name, and she to accept him; for you may imagine, after all

that has happened, she will be glad enough to get married at all—and you know how romantic he is in some things, though he strives to hide it."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Tims!" said Lord Ashborough. "What has happened will make her persist in her refusal more steadily than ever, if she have a drop of her father's blood in her veins. I know those Delawares well, and their cursed pride, which they fancy to be fine feeling and generous sentiment. If it were to save her father and her whole family from destruction, depend upon it she would not marry any man while she thought that her brother's infamy was to be a part of her dowry—I might say her only dowry; for I suppose the pittance she had from her mother has been swallowed up long ago. No, no! all is very safe there. Maria, who has heard a good deal about her from her brother's old tutor, let me unwittingly into the secret, that she is her father over again in those respects; but sting her irritable pride, and you can make her do anything."

"Well, my lord," said Mr. Tims, "if your lordship be sure, I, of course, have nothing to say. Only, I cannot understand any woman refusing a gentleman of Mr. Beauchamp's present wealth and future expectations. I cannot understand it, indeed!"

"I dare say not," replied Lord Ashborough, drily. "But in the meanwhile, Mr. Tims, I think you had better return to Emberton to-night. It is not much above thirty miles. Proceed as earnestly as possible against the son, and after putting matters in train there, come up and meet me in London on Monday next."

"At the same time, my lord," said the lawyer, "I will serve all the tenants with notice not to pay their rents to Sir Sidney Delaware;" and this being agreed to with a smile, Lord Ashborough rejoined his guests, and Mr. Tims proceeded to hold a serious consultation with the housekeeper, over a cold pasty and a glass of sherry, ere he once more set out for Emberton.

CHAPTER XXIV.

After satisfying the cravings of hunger, therefore, and thinking that the time might soon come when the Earl himself would find it necessary to treat him with more attention, Mr. Tims got into his chaise, and once more rolled away towards

Emberton, resolved instantly to see Sir Sidney Delaware, and to embroil the whole affair as much as possible.

His clerk had been left behind at the little town to take care of the business during his absence; and although it was late ere the lawyer returned, he instantly set him to work to prepare notices to all the tenants of Sir Sidney Delaware not to pay their rents. This he new was a bold stroke; but looking upon the unhappy baronet as an enemy in time of war, he knew that one great object was to cut off his supplies. Early the next morning Mr. Tims sallied forth to make a general round of the tenants, and proceeded to a farmhouse, from the crowded stackyard and busy aspect of which he argued a large and prosperous farm. The farmer himself appeared superintending the thatching in the yard; and Mr. Tims, notice in hand, stepped up to him, and informed him of his business.

As the honest man read, his mouth expanded wide across his rosy face, with a grin of satisfaction, which Mr. Tims remarked as something extraordinary at least. "Sorry, sir, I can't oblige you!" said the farmer, eyeing him with a look of merry contempt; "I paid my rent to Sir Sidney yesterday morning. I thought just now—as he is in trouble I hear with some bit of a blackguard lawyer of the name of Tims—he might want the money, you know. So I took it up to the good lady's house where he is stopping, seeing it was due on the twenty-fifth o' last month."

"Oh, you have paid it, have you?" said Mr. Tims. "Then I can tell you, most likely you will have to pay it over again."

"Pay it over again!" cried the farmer, who easily divined who the person was that spoke to him. "Pay it over again! Come, come, none of your gammon, master, or I'll break your head for you, and that is all the payment you'll get from me. Who should I pay my rent to but my own landlord? and a good landlord he has always been, and a kind—never racked us up to the last farthing, like some o' them, though he wanted the money enough himself. I'll tell you what, you had better not say a word against him or his—and if you be one of lawyer Tims' clerks, bid him not show his face among us here, or he'll get such a licking as will serve him for a long while."

While this conversation was proceeding between Mr. Peter Tims and the farmer, a considerable number of the farm-servants had gathered round their master, and very unequivocal signs and symptoms were given as to their sense of the matter. Various words, too, were heard, which sounded harsh upon the tympanum of Peter Tims' ear, such

as—" I shouldn't wonder if it were lawyer Tims himself. A looks like a lawyer—let's duck um in the horsepond—or cart him into the muck."

Peter Tims was, in a certain degree, a coward; and although he could have made up his mind to be knocked down by the farmer for the sake of a good assault case, yet the idea of being "ducked in the horsepond, or carted into the muck," by a body of persons who could not afford to pay a sou for their morning's amusement, made him beat a retreat as fast as possible.

Although Mr. Peter Tims proceeded *seriatim* to each of the tenants on the Emberton estate, it may be unnecessary to detail the particulars of the various receptions he met with. Suffice it, that he found that in one respect they all agreed, which was, that their rent, by a general arrangement between them, had been paid up the day before, which, though the money was really due, was about ten days before the usual time. Although he occasionally met with a somewhat rough reception, and declared that he had never seen a more rude and uncivil set of people in his life, yet he escaped without any actual violence; and in the end, hoping to gain at least some ground, he determined to make his last visit to Sir Sidney Delaware himself.

All these feelings and remembrances made the business very different from any he had before undertaken, and the lawyer's heart even fluttered as the chaise drove through the gates of the dwelling now occupied by Mrs. Darlington. "It is odd enough," he thought, "that my delaying the payment of the money should have caused my uncle's murder. Now, if I were superstitious, I should take fright and not follow this business up, for fear it should turn out ill likewise—but that is all nonsense;" and when the chaise stopped, and a servant appeared, he boldly demanded to speak with Sir Sidney Delaware.

"Sir Sidney Delaware is not here, sir!" replied the man, abruptly.

"Not here!" cried Mr. Tims. "And pray, where is he, then?"

"Can't tell, sir!" replied the man.

"Is your mistress at home?" demanded Mr. Tims, at length, finding that there was nothing to be made of the footman. The answer was in the affirmative, and he was shown into an empty room, where the servant took the precaution of demanding his name, and then went to inform his mistress. After remaining for some time in expectation, Mr. Tims was rejoined by the servant; but, instead of ushering

the lawyer to Mrs. Darlington's presence, he said, with a grave and solemn aspect, "Sir, my mistress bids me inform you that she is busy at present, and cannot receive you."

"Oh, if she is busy, I can wait!" answered Mr. Tims, relapsing determinedly into his chair.

"You may wait all day, for that matter," replied the man, losing patience; "for I can tell you, she does not intend to see you at all. So now you have the plain English of it!"

"Very extraordinary conduct, I must say!" observed Mr. Tims, as with slow and indignant steps he walked towards his chaise.

"And pray, are you really ignorant of Sir Sidney Delaware's present abode?" he added, after having insinuated his hand into his pocket, and drawn forth a broad silver piece, which he thought fully sufficient to tempt the discretion of any Johnny, even if he were as immaculate as Eve before the fall.

But the servant either would not tell, or could not, because he did not know: the latter of which was the most probable, as he answered sharply, as if angry at losing the money through his ignorance. "You have had your answer once, sir," he said, "and I shall give you no other;" and with this ungracious reply, Mr. Tims was obliged to content himself.

The chaise rolled him back hungry and dissatisfied to Emberton, where the tidings he had so often before received, that the pursuit of Captain Delaware had not advanced a single step, did not tend to relieve him. He found, too, that Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware had certainly not returned to their own dwelling, and his inquiry in regard to whither they had gone when they left Mrs. Darlington's, only served to make the people of the town open wide their nostrils, showing plainly that the baronet's departure must have been secret indeed, as it had escaped the all-inquiring eyes and ears of that gossiping community.

If anything could have soothed the mind of Mr. Tims, it would have been, perhaps, the profound respect of the landlord of the King's Arms—he, Mr. Tims, being in no degree insensible to the charms of importance and high station, and enjoying the homage of mine host as a sort of foretaste of the increased consequence he was to possess in society, from his accession to his unfortunate uncle's illgotten wealth.

His dinner comforted him also greatly; and when, after that meal was discussed, the landlord presented himself in person to ask whether he might not recommend his admirable port, Mr. Tims, after an internal struggle, acquiesced, and the wine was accordingly produced.

"Pray, landlord," said the lawyer, after a few words of

innkeeper gossip had passed, while with a clean napkin he rubbed the outside of the decanter; "pray, who was that gentleman standing at the door as I got out, who stared at me so hard — the gentleman in the black coat and grey trousers?"

"Oh, sir!" replied mine host of the King's Arms, "don't you know? That is Mr. Cousins, the officer from London, come to inquire into this sad business!"

"Why, Ruthven was sent for, and came, too; for I saw and spoke to him long!" ejaculated Mr. Tims, in some surprise.

"True, sir!" replied the landlord. "But Ruthven was sent after the Captain, you know; and Dr. Wilton thought it would be better to have some one else down to keep about the place; so Cousins was sent for, and has been here all day—that is to say, about the place; for he was both up at Emberton and at Ryebury, I heard the waiter saying."

"At Emberton!" cried Mr. Tims. "Then, I dare say, he can tell me something of the people there. Will you have the goodness to present my compliments to him, and say, I should be happy if he will take a glass of wine with me?"

"Certainly, sir!" replied the landlord; and away he went in ambassage to Cousins, who soon after was ushered into the private room occupied by Peter Tims, Esq.

He was—or rather is—neither a very tall, nor a very stout man; but yet, in the various points of his frame, there is a good deal of solid strength to be remarked; and in his face, which is pale, and somewhat saturnine, Mr. Tims thought he could trace a great deal of resolution, mingled with that shrewd knowledge of human nature in its most debased form, which is at once necessary to, and inseparable from, the character of an officer of police. The lawyer, seeing that the officer was a very gentlemanly person in his appearance, soon made sufficient advances; and, being seated together over their wine, Mr. Tims inquired whether his companion had heard anything of the family at Emberton.

"No!" he said, in a tone which appeared habitually guarded against all inquiries, except from those authorised to squeeze the contents out of the sponge of his mind. "No—I have heard nothing of them at all."

"Come, now, Mr. Cousins!" said the lawyer, who well entered into the spirit of the wariness displayed by his companion; "you know I am interested in this business!"

"Yes, so I hear, sir," replied Cousins, without a word more.

"Well, then, be a little more communicative, Mr. Cousins,"

rejoined the lawyer. "Did you see any of the family at the Park?"

"No," answered the officer; "they were all away!"

"But did not the old woman—the housekeeper—or cook—or something—tell you where they had gone to?" demanded the lawyer.

"There was no old housekeeper there," answered the officer. "They were all away together, and the house shut up."

Mr. Tims was beaten out of his impassibility, and absolutely stared. "But surely you know where they are gone to; or, at least you guess?" he said, after a pause.

"Why, I may guess, to be sure," replied Cousins; "but that is nothing to nobody, you know. If one were to tell everything they guess, sir, not one-half of their guesses would come true!"

Mr. Tims paused for a minute or two, seeing that, for some reason, Cousins was resolute in not saying a word upon the affairs of Sir Sidney Delaware; and, therefore, like a good tactician, finding the enemy's position impregnable in front, he determined to shift his ground, and make an attack from another quarter. "You have been, I hear, at my poor unhappy uncle's place at Ryebury, too?" said Mr. Tims, at length. "Did you make any new discoveries? Fill your glass, Mr. Cousins."

"None that I know of, sir," replied Cousins, answering the question and obeying the command at the same time. "The house was just as it was left, I fancy."

"But did you find nothing that might lead to the detection of the murderer?" said Mr. Tims.

"Why, sir, I understood that you had detected the murderer yourself," answered the officer; "and that his name was Captain William Delaware."

"Yes! that is all true enough," rejoined the lawyer; "but I mean, did you find no new proof against him!"

"Why, as to that, sir, I did not find any in particular," replied Cousins. "Indeed, the only thing of which I found any positive proof at all, was, that somebody had been murdered."

"The man is a fool!" thought Mr. Peter Tims—"a natural!" But yet there was a small, twinkling, subdued sort of fun lurking about the corners of Cousins' dark eyes that caused the lawyer strongly to suspect that the officer was making a jest of him, and he consequently found himself waxing vastly indignant. His anger, however, led him into no extravagance; and, after having put a variety of other questions to his companion, who did not choose to give a

straightforward answer to any of them, his wrath assumed the form of sullen silence, which he expected would soon be received as a hint to retire.

In this he was mistaken. Cousins remained with outstretched feet and emulative silence, filling his glass unbidden, with a fond reliance on the generosity of the lawyer's disposition, for all which he was heartily given to the devil full a dozen times within the next half-hour. At the end of that period, the landlord again appeared at the door, and gave Mr. Cousins a nod. The officer immediately started upon his feet, and wishing Mr. Tims good-night, with many thanks for his kind condescension, he followed mine host out of the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

Leaving Mr. Tims to meditate for half an hour, and then to call his clerk, in order to proceed with business of various kinds, we must follow Cousins, the officer, along the passage, down the six steps at the end, up the six steps opposite, and thence into another room, larger and more handsomely furnished, in a different part of the house. As he entered, the whole demeanour of the officer was as completely changed as it is possible to imagine; and, instead of the easy and nonchalant, perhaps somewhat listless air, which had overspread him in the presence of the attorney, he entered the chamber to which he had been summoned with a look of brisk activity, mingled with respect, which strangely altered his whole appearance. The character of the persons before whom he now presented himself might easily account for the change; for the officer was too well acquainted with all ranks and stations of men, and too much accustomed to suit his conduct to his company, not to make the most marked difference in his demeanour towards a low attorney and towards two men of so much respectability as Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton. Neither of those two gentlemen, it is true, could be considered as so wealthy as Mr. Tims had lately become; but, thank God! wealth—notwithstanding all its efforts to confound itself with respectability—has not yet been able to do so entirely, even in the eyes of the vulgar.

The two magistrates were sitting together after dinner; but glasses and decanters had been removed, a clerk called in, and each had his bundle of notes before him. Cousins bowed respectfully, and advanced to the end of the table, but no further; while Dr. Wilton—who, as the reader may have

remarked, had been quite bewildered and overcome during the examination of William Delaware—having now resumed all that quick and active intelligence which was the ordinary characteristic of his mind, proceeded to question the officer as to the result of his investigations during the morning.

"Well, Cousins," he said, "you went to Ryebury, of course? Did you examine accurately the foot-marks that I mentioned to you?"

"Not those in the garden, sir," replied the officer, with a countenance now full of quick intelligence; "because you see, sir, it was very evident that such a number of people had been there since the murder, that there was no use; for we could not have distinguished one from the other; but I went up into the room where it had been done, and there the matter was clear enough."

"Ha!" said Mr. Egerton. "And what did you make out there? I saw nothing but a pool of blood flowing from the dead body."

"I beg your worship's pardon," answered the officer; "but you are mistaken there. As far as I could make out, it must have been done by two men—I don't mean to say, mind, that there were not three; but, if there were, the other never stepped in the blood; but two there were certainly, for I got the tread of one very near whole—that is to say, the round of his boot heel, and more than three inches of the toe from the tip, backwards—so that one of them had a remarkably long foot. There is the measure and shape of it, as far as I could get it—more than twelve inches, you see, sir."

"And the other!" said Dr. Wilton—"the other man's foot—what was the length of it?"

"Ah, sir, that I could not get at!" replied the officer. "There was nothing but about five inches of the fore-part of the sole; but that I got twice; and it is as different a foot, you see, from the other as one would wish to find—twice as broad, and square toed. And then I got the mark of a hand, too, which must have been at the poor old devil's throat when they were cutting it, for it was all blood. It had rested on the cornice of the dado; and the fellow, whoever he was, wanted part of the third finger of his left hand."

"Ha, that is a good fact!" said Dr. Wilton, eagerly; "but how did you make that out, Cousins?"

"Why, sir, because it marked all the way up, but left off suddenly before it got to the end," answered the officer.

"But might not that finger have been bent?" said Mr. Egerton.

"Not unless it bent in the middle of the second joint," replied Cousins; "but the matter was quite clear, sir; and one

has nothing to do but look at it to satisfy oneself that a part of the finger was wanting; and what is oddest of all, that it has not been taken off at the joint. All I saw besides was, that the fellow who cut the old man's throat must have gone away with his pantaloons very bloody; for he did it kneeling, and there is just a clear spot where his knee and part of his leg kept the blood from going over the floor."

"Indeed, that may serve some purpose, too!" said Dr. Wilton; "but did you find no more steps or marks of any other person?"

"Oh, plenty of steps, sir!" replied the officer. "There were all the dirty feet of the coroner's inquest. But I think —though I'm not quite so sure of that—that there must have been somebody left below to keep watch, while the others went up to do the job. You see, sir, there is in one place of the passage floor a fresh deal, and I can trace upon that deal the marks of a shoe with large nails in it, going backwards and forwards the matter of twenty times. Now, I hear that the deal was put in not a week ago, and all the folks here agree that the old man never let a person with nails in his shoes twenty times into his house in all his life; so it looks like as if that were the only time and way in which it could get so often marked."

The two magistrates looked at each other, and Mr. Egerton answered, "Your suspicion is a shrewd one, Cousins; but now, tell us sincerely, from all that you have seen and heard, do you think that Captain Delaware has been one of those concerned?"

"Why really, sir, I cannot say!" answered the officer; "but to tell the truth—though there is no knowing after all —nevertheless—not to speak for a certainty, you know—but still, I should think not."

"You are now speaking to us in confidence, you know, Cousins," said Dr. Wilton; "and, indeed, we are altogether acting extra-officially in regard to the murder, though we think it may connect itself with the other affair. Tell us, therefore, why you judge it was not Captain Delaware."

"Why, sir, that is difficult to say," replied the officer. "But first and foremost, do you see, it strikes me that the job was done by as knowing a hand as ever was on the lay—one that has had a regular apprenticeship like. Well, as far as I can hear, that does not match the Captain. Then, next, whoever did it, has got in upon the sly, by means of the girl, whether she be an accessory or not. At all events, she has gone off with her 'complices.—She's never murdered—never a bit of her, take my word for that! Then you see, sir, when I had done with Ryebury, I went away to Emberton

Park House; and though there was a mighty fuss to get in, all the family being gone, yet I managed it at last, and got a whole heap of the Captain's old boots and shoes, and measured them with the footmarks, and on oath I could prove that none of them—neither those up nor those down stairs—the marks I mean—ever came off his foot."

"Why, it would seem to me, that what you have said would go very far to exculpate him altogether," said Dr Wilton.

"Ay, sir! but that is a mighty rum story about the notes," answered the officer. "It would make a queer case for the 'sizes, any how. Nevertheless, I don't think him guilty; and if he would explain about the money, all would be clear enough—but that story of his won't go; and if he sticks to it and is caught, he'll be hang'd if Judge —— tries him. He'll get off if it come before Sir ——. He did well enough to slip his head out of the collar any way."

"But do you not think that Ruthven will catch him, then?" demanded Dr. Wilton, with no small anxiety.

"Why, not near so easy as if he were an old thief," replied the officer; "for you see, sir, we know all their haunts and where they'll take to in a minute, while this young chap may go Lord knows where!"

Both the magistrates paused thoughtfully for a minute or two, and at length Dr. Wilton went on: "You see, Cousins, the fact is this, that the coroner having issued his warrant against Captain Delaware, our straightforward duty as magistrates is to use all means to put the warrant in execution; and we are neither called upon, nor have we perhaps a strict legal right, after a verdict has been pronounced, to seek for evidence in favour of the person against whom that verdict has been given. At the same time, we are blamed for not committing the prisoner at once; and the coroner is blamed for not sending him off to the county jail the moment the verdict was given, though it was then night. It is also a part of our clearest duty to do all in our power to bring the guilty to punishment, and to prepare the case, in a certain degree, for the officers of the crown; consequently, without any great stretch of interpretation, we may consider ourselves justified in using every means to satisfy ourselves who are innocent and who are guilty. You think that Captain Delaware is not the culprit; and you think that three persons have, at all events, been concerned in the murder. Some suspicion of this kind must also have been in the minds of the coroner's jury, when they returned a verdict against Captain William Delaware, and some person or persons unknown. It is our

next business, therefore, to search for those persons unknown by every means in our power."

"Why, as to the Captain, sir," answered Cousins, "the business would be soon settled, if we could find out how he came by the money."

"It is the most extraordinary thing in the world," said Dr. Wilton, "that Mr. Beauchamp cannot be found anywhere—I am really beginning to be apprehensive concerning him. He left me in a very low and depressed state; and if his servant, Harding, were not with him—which, as he is not to be heard of either, it would seem he is—I should be afraid that his mind had given way."

"Harding! Harding!" said Cousins, thoughtfully; "I wonder if that could be the Harding who was a sort of valet and secretary to —— the banker, and who pocketed a good deal of his cash when he failed. He had well nigh been hanged, or at least taken a swim across the pond—but the lawyer let him off for some disclosures he made, and got him a new place too, they say! I have lost sight of that chap for a long time. But, however, sir, you were speaking about the persons unknown. Now I think, do you see, that I have got the end of a clue that may lead to one of them; and if we get one we cannot fail to get all."

"Who, then, do you think it is?" demanded Mr. Egerton. "Let no means be spared to find out even one of the ruffians."

"Why, sir, you see, I don't mind telling you, because it will go no further; but I think it had better be alone;" and he looked significantly at the clerk, who was instantly ordered to withdraw.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," said Cousins, more freely, when the other had left the room; "but I've known some of those country clerks that were the arrantest gossips in the whole neighbourhood. However, the matter is, I hit upon what I think is the head of the right nail, when I was after the other business, do you see. You told me to inquire about the burning of the lady's house, and the silver plate that had disappeared; so, amongst other things, I went to the coach office, and examined the books, and just about that time I found that there had been two parcels sent up to Amos Jacobs, Esq., to be left till called for. Now, thinks I, who can Amos Jacobs be, but the old Jew of the Scuttlehole, as they call him. He receives stolen goods, gentlemen, and is as great a blind as ever swung. Well, I asked the book-keeper if he had noticed those two parcels, and he said yes, because they were so small, and yet so heavy. So then I asked who

brought them, and he said, a gentleman who had been lodging three doors down the street for six weeks or so. So away I went, and looking up at the house, I saw, 'Lodgings to Let' stuck up, and in I walked."

"Mr. Beauchamp's lodgings, I dare say," said Dr. Wilton, smiling.

"No, sir!" replied Cousins, "I knew those before. They lie a good bit further down. But an old woman came to show me the lodgings, thinking I was going to take them; so I asked her who had been in them before, and she up and told me all about it. A very nice gentleman, she said, he was, who was a great chemist, she believed; for he was always puddling about over a fire, making experiments, as he told her—but bless you, gentlemen! he was just making white soup of the lady's plate—that was what he was doing. So then I asked her his name, and she told me it was Mr. Anthony Smithson. So then the whole matter came upon me at once. Your worships must understand that, as far as I know of or remember, there is only one man upon the lay in London who has lost a bit of his finger, and not having seen him for some time, I had forgot all about him. His name is Tony Thomson—but sometimes people call him Billy Winter—and at times he took the name of Johnson—and Perkins too, I have heard him called—but the name he went by generally, a good while ago, was Tony Smithson."

"But if the lodgings were to be let, he must of course be gone," cried Dr. Wilton; "and we are as far off from the facts as ever."

"Oh! he is gone, sure enough!" answered the officer. "That was the first thing I asked the old woman, and she told me that he went the very day before the terrible murder, and that he would be so sorry to hear it, for he used often to walk up that way, and asked her many questions about Mr. Tims, poor old man. Well, when I heard this, and had got a good deal more out of her, I thought I might as well look through the place, for these sort of folks generally are in too great a hurry not to leave something behind them; and I opened all the drawers and places—and the old woman thought it very strange, till I told her who I was. He had cleared all away, however, except this gold thimble, which had fallen half way down between the drawers and the wall. It has got 'J. D.' upon it, which, I take it, means—'Something Darlington.' So it must have been prigged at the time of the fire."

Dr. Wilton and Mr. Egerton both looked at the thimble, and felt convinced that it had belonged to Mrs. Darlington. At all events, the information which Cousins had obtained, was of course most important, as it rendered it more than probable

that one at least of the persons who had robbed if not fired the house upon the hill, had been also a principal in the murder of the miser. Both the magistrates, therefore, joined in giving high commendations to the officer, and particular directions were added for prosecuting the investigation. Cousins, however, had already anticipated several of the orders he now received.

"I tried all I could, sir," he replied, "to find out some of the fellow's stray boots or shoes, but he had left none behind. I then went to all the different shoemakers and cobblers, to see if any of them could give me his measure; but he had been too cunning for that. The stage coachman, however, remembered taking him up here for London, and setting him down, by his own desire, at a little public-house four miles off; so that we have got upon the right scent, beyond doubt; and if you will give me permission, gentlemen, I will go out this evening, and find out whom he most kept company with in this place, before the matter gets blown. I have had a good pumping to-night already; but it would not do."

"And pray, who took the trouble of pumping you, Cousins?" demanded Mr. Egerton. "Though this is the most gossiping town in Europe, I should have thought there was roguery enough in it, also, to keep the inhabitants from meddling unnecessarily with a police-officer."

"It was none of the people of the place, sir!" replied Cousins. "They only stared at me. This was the Mr. Tims who gave the Captain in charge, I hear. He seems a sharp hand, and he has a great good-will to prove the Captain guilty, though I don't see, just yet, what good it would do him either."

Dr. Wilton asked several questions concerning the lawyer, and the examination to which he had subjected the officer; and then—after shaking his head, and observing that he believed Mr. Peter Tims to be a great rogue—he dismissed Cousins to pursue his inquiries in the town.

It must be here remarked, that Mr. Egerton, although he knew William Delaware personally, and did not think him at all a person to commit the crime with which he was charged, had never felt that assured confidence in his innocence which Dr. Wilton had always experienced. It was not, indeed, that Mr. Egerton thought worse of Captain Delaware individually than the clergyman did, but he thought worse of the whole human race. Gradually, however, he had been coming over to Dr. Wilton's opinion; and his conversation that night with the officer had completely made a convert of him, by showing him that, notwithstanding the one extraordinary circumstance which yet remained to be explained, every new fact that was elicited

tended more and more to prove that the murder had been committed by persons of a very different class and habits from the supposed delinquent. Feeling, therefore, that in some degree he had done the unfortunate young gentleman injustice, he now determined to redouble his exertions to apprehend the real culprits, in the hope and expectation of clearing the character of Captain Delaware. With this view, he resolved to remain at Emberton that night, contrary to his former plans; and he proposed to Dr. Wilton to visit the old miser's house at Ryebury the next morning, in order to verify the footmarks, as measured by Cousins, lest the new proprietor might think fit, after the funeral, which was to take place at four that day, to have all traces of the horrid scene effaced, which he might do for more reasons than one, if the malevolence Captain Delaware charged him with were really his motive.

"The truth is," replied Dr. Wilton, in answer to this proposal, "that I intended to go very early to-morrow to Mrs. Darlington's, to see poor Blanche Delaware, and try to discover whether she can give any clue by which Henry Beauchamp can be found."

"Is it likely that she should possess any?" said Mr. Egerton, laughing.

"They are cousins, you know," answered Dr. Wilton, with a smile which served to contradict the reason that his words seemed to assign for the knowledge of her cousin's movements which he attributed to Miss Delaware. "They are cousins, you know, and I have heard it reported that there was something more—but, at all events, I am anxious about the lad, and do not choose to leave any chance of discovering him untried."

"But, by the way, I forgot," said Mr. Egerton, "I heard an hour or two ago that Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware had left Mrs. Darlington's, and had gone to some watering-place, I think the people said."

"Oh no, impossible!" said Dr. Wilton. "They would have let me hear, as a matter of course." Nevertheless, he rose and rang the bell, although, so convinced was he of the truth of what he asserted, that, ere the waiter appeared, he had proceeded to arrange with Mr. Egerton, that while that gentleman went to Ryebury, and verified the traces which Cousins had observed, he would drive to Mrs. Darlington's, and make the inquiries he proposed.

"Pray, have you heard anything of Sir Sidney Delaware having left Mrs. Darlington's new house?" demanded Dr. Wilton, when the waiter appeared.

"Yes, sir!" replied the man. "Mr. Tims—lawyer Tims, sir—who was there this morning, could find none of them, and

has been inquiring all over the place to make out where they are gone to. But nobody can tell, sir, and every one says they have run away."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Egerton; "that will do!" and the waiter retired.

"This is very extraordinary!" said Dr. Wilton. "Every one seems to be disappearing, one after the other. Nevertheless, I will go up and inquire of Mrs. Darlington, and will come and join you at Ryebury afterwards."

The meeting was accordingly arranged, and, shortly after, Cousins returned, bringing a vast store of fresh information. Mr. Anthony Smithson, alias Thomson, alias Perkins, alias Johnson, alias Winter, fully described and particularised, so as to leave no doubt whatever of his identity with crush-fingered Billy Winter, a notorious London flashman, had been remarked, by all the wondermongers of Emberton, for his intimacy with Mr. Harding, Mr. Burrel's servant. He had been also observed to have a peculiar predilection for the lanes and fields about the house at Ryebury. This information had led the officer to fresh inquiries concerning the philosophical Harding himself, who had been accurately described by the investigating and observing people of Emberton; and, on his return, Cousins expressed his fullest conviction, that he was the identical Harding who had, as he before described, got off in a serious criminal case, solely by the connivance of an attorney. Who that attorney was, need hardly be explained; and indeed, to do so, would only lead us into the details of a previous affair, totally unconnected with this history. Suffice it, that no sooner did Cousins hear that Harding had been with his master, at the house of Mrs. Darlington, on the day of the fire, than he at once declared himself to be perfectly certain that his hands, and no others, had kindled the flame. He added also, that he did not doubt that Smithson and Harding —whether they had exactly fixed upon any precise object or not—had come down to Emberton, with the intention of acting in concert; and he added, that it would not at all surprise him to find that they were the two who committed the murder itself, especially as the people had particularly described to him the valet's long foot.

While he was speaking, Dr. Wilton rapidly turned over his notes of the examination of Captain Delaware, and the servants at Emberton Park, and at length lighted upon the declaration of the man-servant, who stated, that in returning from some errand in that direction, he had seen the valet Harding at the back of the park, the lanes surrounding which led directly towards Ryebury.

"If I could think of any reason for his putting the money

in the Captain's room," said Cousins, as the clergyman read this passage, "I should think that Harding had done it himself, on purpose to hang him."

"May he not have been instigated to do it by others?" said Mr. Egerton.

"If one could find out any reason for it," replied the officer.

"Why, Captain Delaware suspected something of the kind himself," replied the magistrate; and he read a part of the young fugitive's letter, watching from time to time, as he did so, the effect it produced upon the countenance of a man who, like Cousins, was accustomed to trace and encounter crime in every form. The officer closed one eye, put his tongue slightly into his cheek, and ended by a half whistle.

"You had better look to it, gentlemen," he said; "such things have been done before now."

"We will!" answered Dr. Wilton; "let us see you tomorrow about nine, Cousins."

The officer took the hint, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On his visit to Mrs. Darlington, Dr. Wilton obtained no information whatever, except that the tidings he had before heard were true. Sir Sidney Delaware and his daughter, Mrs. Darlington said, had indeed left her; but they had requested, as a particular favour, that she would not even inquire whither they were going; and, as the favour was a very small one, she had granted it of course. From the house of that worthy lady, Dr. Wilton proceeded to join Mr. Egerton at Ryebury, where—according to their own request—they were met by the coroner for the county. All the traces which had been observed by Cousins were verified, and a complete plan of the scene of the murder was made under the direction of the magistrates.

A long conference took place at the same time between the two justices and the coroner, who expressed less dissatisfaction at the escape of Captain Delaware than they had expected.

"We must share the blame between us, gentlemen," he said. "You, for not having remanded him to some secure place; I, for not having sent him five-and-twenty miles that night to the county jail. Certain it is, the case was a very doubtful one, and I would fain have had the jury adjourn till

the following morning. But in truth," he added, "coroners' juries, knowing that their decision is not final, and disgusted and agitated by the horrible scenes they are obliged to examine, very often return a hasty and ill-considered verdict, in spite of all the officers of the crown can do. This was, I am afraid, the case in the present instance; and I have no doubt that the young man may have made his escape more from apprehension of a long and painful imprisonment—which is a severe punishment in itself—than from any consciousness of guilt."

Finding his opinion thus far favourable, the two magistrates communicated to the crown-officer all that they had discovered in regard to Harding and Smithson, and also the faint suspicion which they entertained, that Harding, at the instigation of Mr. Tims, junior, had placed the money in the chamber of Captain Delaware.

The coroner, however, shook his head. "As to Harding and Smithson," he said, "the matter is sufficiently made out to justify us in issuing warrants for their apprehension; and Harding may, perhaps—from some motive we know nothing of—have placed the money as you suspect, especially as he seems to have been well acquainted with Emberton Park; but I do not believe that Mr. Tims had anything to do with it."

While the warrants were in preparation, it was announced to the magistrates that Mr. Peter Tims himself was below, with the undertakers; and also, that the constable of a neighbouring parish had brought up a boy who had found a hat upon the sea-shore, which, it was supposed, might throw some light upon the matter before the magistrates.

Mr. Tims was accordingly directed to wait, while the boy was brought up, and the hat examined. The peculiarity of its form—a form unknown in Emberton—and of its colour—a shade of that light russet-brown in which Shakspeare clothes the Dawn for her morning's walk—at once led Dr. Wilton to believe that it had belonged to his unfortunate friend Henry Beauchamp. As Beauchamp, however, was not one of those men who write their names in their hats, the matter still remained in the most unpleasant state in the world—a state of doubt; and such a state being not less disagreeable to Dr. Wilton than to any one else—after catechising the boy, and discovering that nothing was to be discovered, except that the hat had been washed on shore at about five miles' distance from Ryebury, of which washing it bore ample marks—the worthy clergyman left his companions in magistracy to expedite the warrants, and returned in person to Emberton, in order to examine Mrs. Wilson, Beauchamp's late landlady, in

regard to the hat, which he carried thither along with him.

As soon as Mrs. Wilson saw it, she declared that it was the identical hat that poor dear Mr. Burrel used always to wear in the morning. She had seen it, she said, full a hundred times, and knew it, because the leather inside was laced with a silk tag, for all the world like the boddices she could remember when she was young. Eagerly, also, did she question Dr. Wilton as to where it had been found; for it seems that Mr. Burrel had been no small favourite with the old lady; and when she was made acquainted with the facts, she wrung her hands, declaring that she was sure the poor young gentleman had gone and drowned himself for love of Miss Delaware.

Dr. Wilton inquired what was the size of the valet's foot, at which Mrs. Wilson looked aghast, demanding, "Lord! how should she know what was the size of the gentleman's foot? But stay!" she cried, the moment after, "Stay, stay, sir! Now I think of it, I can tell to a cheeseparing; for in the hurry that he went away in, he left a pair of boots behind him; and the groom, when he set off the morning after, would not take them, because he said Mr. Harding was always jawing him, and meddling with his business, and some day or another he would tell him a thing or two."

Dr. Wilton demanded an immediate sight of the boots, with all the eagerness of a connoisseur, and with much satisfaction beheld a leathern foot-bag, of extraordinary length, brought in by the landlady, who declared, as she entered, that "he had a very long foot after all."

The boot was immediately carried off to the inn; but as Mr. Egerton had the measurements with him at Ryebury, Dr. Wilton was obliged to wait one mortal hour and a half ere he could proceed to ascertain the correspondence of the valet's boot with the bloody mark of the murderer's foot, tormenting himself about Beauchamp in the meanwhile. After waiting that time, however, in fretful incertitude, as to going to the place itself, or staying his fellow magistrate's return, Mr. Egerton appeared, the paper on which the foot-marks had been traced was produced, and the boot being set down thereon, filled up one of the vacant spaces without the difference of a line.

"Now, now we have him!" cried Dr. Wilton, rubbing his hands eagerly; "Now we have him. Beyond all question, the counsel for the crown will permit the least criminal to become king's evidence, and I doubt not, in the slightest degree, that we shall find poor William Delaware completely exculpated."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Before Lord Ashborough had concluded his breakfast on the Monday morning, a servant announced that Mr. Peter Tims had been shown into the library; and thither he bent his steps, after he had kept the lawyer waiting long enough to preserve his dignity and show his indifference.

Mr. Peter Tims was seated in the far corner of the library, with great humility, and rose instantly on the peer's entrance, bowing to the ground. The fact was—and it may need some explanation—that Mr. Tims found he was growing a great man, in his own estimation, on the wealth he derived from his uncle. He had just discovered that pride was beginning to get above avarice in his heart, and he became afraid that Lord Ashborough might think he was deviating into too great familiarity, from feeling a strong inclination in his own bosom to do so. Such a consummation was, of course, not desirable on many accounts; and with his usual politic shrewdness, Peter Tims resolved to assume a far greater degree of humility than he really felt, and—while by other means he raised himself slowly in the estimation both of his noble patron and the world in general, suffering his newly-acquired wealth silently to act with its own weight—determined to affect still a tone of ample subserviency till his objects were fully gained.

In the meanwhile, Lord Ashborough, who believed that a gulf as wide as that which yawned in the Forum lay between himself and Peter Tims, bespoke the lawyer with condescending civility, bade him take a seat, and inquired what news he had brought from Emberton.

Mr. Peter Tims hesitated, and then replied, that the news he brought was bad, he was afraid, in every respect. "In the first place, my lord, I have not been able to stop any of the rents, for they had unfortunately been paid on the day preceding my return to Emberton. In the next place, it would appear that Sir Sidney Delaware has run away as well as his son; for he has certainly disappeared, and, notwithstanding every means I could use, I was not able to discover any trace of him."

He had imagined that Lord Ashborough would have expressed nothing but disappointment at tidings which threatened to make his views upon the Emberton estate more vague and difficult of success; but he was mistaken. The first

passion in the peer's breast was revenge. The picture presented to him was Sidney Delaware flying from his country, disgraced, ruined, and blighted in mind and body. Memory strode over three-and-twenty years in an instant, and showed him the same man as he had then appeared—his successful rival triumphing in his disappointment. Placing the portrait of the present and the past together, the peer again tasted the joy of revenge, and mentally ate his enemy's heart in the market-place. For a moment, avarice gave place to revenge; but, after all, avarice is the most durable and permanent of human passions. Like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, it gets upon the back of everything else that invades its own domain, and never leaves them till they die of inanition. Ambition sometimes gorges itself; pride is occasionally brought down; vanity tires; and love grows cold; but avarice, once possessed of the human heart, may be driven into the inmost recesses for a moment, but never quits the citadel, and always, sooner or later, regains the outworks.

"Will this make any difference with regard to our proceedings against the old man and his son?" demanded the peer, after he had given revenge its moment, and had suffered avarice to return.

"Not at all, as respects the son!" answered Mr. Tims; "but I am afraid that, in the father's case, it may occasion some delays. You see, my lord, not knowing where he is, we cannot serve him with process. In regard to the son, too, you see, my lord, nothing can be discovered—not the slightest trace. However, I doubt not that we shall be able to fit him with a law that will secure your lordship the reversion. But I am afraid, my lord, I have still worse news in store for you. Grieved I am to be such a croaking raven in your lordship's ears, and thus to——"

"Do me the favour, then, my good sir," said Lord Ashborough, cutting across his figures of speech impatiently, "to make your croaking as brief as possible; and, without circumlocution, to tell me what is the matter."

"I would first ask your lordship," said Mr. Tims, who had a great opinion of the foolish plan of breaking bad tidings by degrees—"I would first ask your lordship, if you have lately heard from Mr. Beauchamp?"

"Oh, is that all?" said Lord Ashborough. "I told you before, and I tell you again, Mr. Tims, there is no more chance of her marrying Henry Beauchamp, than there is of my marrying my walking-stick."

"But it is not that, my lord!" cried Mr. Tims. "It is not that at all! I am afraid Mr. Beauchamp is drowned!"

Lord Ashborough started from his chair, pale and aghast, with a complication of painful feelings which Mr. Tims had little thought could be excited by the death of any living thing. But the lawyer made the common mistake of generalising too broadly. He had fancied that his patron was calmly callous to everything but what immediately affected himself, and he was mistaken; for it is improbable that there ever was a man whose heart, if we could have traced all its secret chambers and intricate windings, did not somewhere contain a store, however small, of gentle feelings and affections. Lord Ashborough loved his nephew, though probably Henry Beauchamp was the only human being he did sincerely love. In him all the better affections of his heart had centered.

Lord Ashborough had also loved his brother, Beauchamp's father; and, in early life, when the heart is soft, he had done him many a kindness, which—as they were, perhaps, the only truly generous actions of his life—made him love his brother still more, as the object that had excited them. Neither, in the whole course of their lives, did there occur one unfortunate point of rivalry between them; and Mr. Beauchamp, or rather Governor Beauchamp, as he was at last generally called, felt so deeply the various acts of friendship which his brother had shown to him, and him alone, in all the world, that he took the best way of expressing his gratitude, namely, by making Lord Ashborough on all occasions appear to advantage, giving way to his pride, putting the most favourable construction on his actions, and never opposing him in words, however differently he might shape his own conduct. Thus the love of his brother remained unshaken and increasing, till the last day of Governor Beauchamp's life; and at his death it was transferred to his son, rendered indeed more tender, but not decreased, by regret for the father, and by the softening power of memory.

It is sad to think that any less noble feelings should have mingled with these purer affections, even though they might tend to increase the intensity of his affection for Henry Beauchamp. It would be far more grateful to the mind, to let this redeeming point stand out resplendent in the character of the peer; but we are telling truth, and it must not be. The shadow, however, perhaps, is a slight one; but it was pride of two kinds that gave the full height to Lord Ashborough's love for Beauchamp. In the first place, to his titles and estates there was no other heir than Henry Beauchamp. There was not even any collateral line of male descent, which could have perpetuated the earldom, if his nephew had been removed. Henry Beauchamp dead, and the peer

saw himself the last Lord Ashborough. In him, therefore, had centered all the many vague, and, we might almost call them, mysterious, feelings of interest with which we regard the being destined to carry on our race and name into the long futurity. Family pride, then, tended to increase the Earl's affection for his nephew; but there was pride also of another kind concerned. Lord Ashborough admired Henry Beauchamp as well as loved him; and, strange to say, admired him, not only for the qualities which they possessed in common, but for the qualities which his nephew possessed, and which he himself did not. They were both good horsemen, and Lord Ashborough had been in his youth, like Henry Beauchamp, skilled in all manly exercises, had been elegant in his manners, and graceful in his person; but light wit, a fertile imagination, a generous disposition, were qualities that the Earl had never possessed; and yet he was gratified beyond measure that his nephew did possess them, delighted in the admiration they called upon him, and was proud of the heir to his fortune and his name.

All these facts had been overlooked by Mr. Tims, whose mind, though of the same kind of web as that of his patron, was of a grosser texture; and not a little was he surprised and frightened when he beheld the effect which his abrupt tidings produced upon the Earl.

Lord Ashborough turned deadly pale, and, staggering up, rang the bell violently. Mr. Tims would have spoken, but the Earl waved his hand for him to be silent: and when the servant appeared, exclaimed, "The drops out of my dressing-room! Quick!"

The man disappeared, but returned in a moment with vial and glass; and pouring out a few drops, Lord Ashborough swallowed them hastily; and then, leaning his head upon his hand, paused for a minute or two, while the servant stood silent beside him, and the lawyer gazed upon him in horror and astonishment. In a short time the peer's colour returned; and, giving a nod to the servant, who was evidently not unaccustomed to scenes somewhat similar, he said, "You may go!"

"Now, Mr Tims," he continued, when the door was once more closed, "what were you telling me? But first, let me say you should be more cautious in making such communications. Do you not know that I am subject to spasms of the heart, which are always brought on by any sudden affection of the mind?"

Mr. Tims apologised, and declared his ignorance, and vowed he would not have done such a thing for the world; but Lord Ashborough soon stopped him, and demanded, with

some impatience, what had given rise to the apprehension he had expressed. The lawyer, then, with circumlocution, if not with delicacy, proceeded to state the rumours that he had heard at Emberton, which had been confirmed to him by Mrs. Wilson, namely, that Mr. Beauchamp's hat had been washed on shore on the sea-side not far from that place. He had found it his duty, he said, to make inquiries, especially as the good landlady had declared that the young gentleman had appeared very melancholy and "out of sorts" on the day he left her. No other part of Mr. Beauchamp's apparel had been found except a glove, which was picked up on the road leading from Emberton to a little fishing village, not far off.

"There is one sad fact, my lord, however," continued the lawyer, "which gives me great apprehension. I, myself, in the course of my inquiries, discovered Mr. Beauchamp's beautiful hunter, Martindale, in the hands of a poor pot-house keeper, in a village about three miles, or not so much, from Emberton. This man and his servants were the last people who saw your nephew. He came there, it appears, late one evening on horseback, asked if they had a good dry stable, put up his horse, saw it properly attended to, and then walked out, looking very grave and disconsolate, the man said. I found that this person knew the horse's name; and, when I asked him how he had learned it, for he did not know Mr. Beauchamp at all, he said that the gentleman, just before he went, had patted the horse's neck, and said, 'My poor Martindale! I must take care of you, however.'"

Lord Ashborough listened with a quivering lip and haggard eye, as Mr. Tims proceeded with his tale. "Have you been at his house?" he demanded, as the other concluded.

"I went there the first thing this morning, my lord," replied Mr. Tims; "but I am very sorry to say, none of his servants know anything whatever in regard to him. They all say they have been expecting him in town every day for the last week."

Lord Ashborough again rang the bell. "Order horses to the carriage immediately!" he said, when his servant appeared; "and go on to Marlborough-street, with my compliments to Sir George F——, and a request that he would send me an experienced officer, who can go down with me into the country directly. Mr. Tims, I must inquire into this business myself. I leave you here behind to take every measure that is necessary; but, above all things, remember that you have ten thousand pounds to pay into the hands of poor Beauchamp's agents. Do not fail to do it in the course of to-day; and explain to them that the business of the bill

was entirely owing to forgetfulness. Let all the expenses be paid, and clear away that business at once. I am almost sorry that it was ever done."

"And about Sir Sidney Delaware, my lord?" said Mr. Tims. "What——"

"Proceed against him instantly!" interrupted the peer, setting his teeth firm, "by every means, and all means! The same with his son! Leave not a stone unturned to bring him to justice, or punish him for contumacy. If it had not been for those two villains, and their damned intrigues, this would not have happened to poor Henry!"

Thus do men deceive themselves; and thus those things that, would they listen to conscience instead of desire, might become warnings and reproofs, they turn to apologies for committing fresh wrongs, and fuel to feed the fire of their passions into a blaze. The observation may be commonplace, but it is true; and let the man who does not do so, call it trite, if he will—no one else has a right.

It was evident that the Earl was in no placable mood; and Mr. Tims, though he had much yet to speak of, and many a plan to propose, in order to overcome those legal difficulties to the design he had suggested, which were now springing up rapidly to his mind, yet thought it expedient to put off the discussion of the whole till his noble patron was in a more fitting humour, not a little apprehensive that, if he touched upon the matter at present, the Earl's anger might turn upon himself, for discovering obstacles in a path which he had formerly represented as smooth and easy. He therefore contented himself with asking a few more directions; and, leaving Lord Ashborough, proceeded straight to Doctors' Commons to make the necessary arrangements concerning his uncle's property. That done, he visited the Stamp-office; his business there being of no small consequence to himself. It was neither more nor less than to cause a paper to be stamped, which he had found amongst other documents belonging to his uncle, which acknowledged the receipt of the sum of ten thousand pounds from Mr. Tims, of Ryebury, and was signed by Henry Beauchamp.

Considerable difficulties were offered at the Stamp-office to the immediate legalisation of this paper; but Mr. Tims was so completely aware of every legal point, and, through Lord Ashborough's business, was so well known at the office, that it was at length completed, and he immediately turned his steps toward the house of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, who had lately become the law-agents of Henry Beauchamp. Before he had gone above half a mile on the road thither, he pulled the check-string of the hackney-coach in which he was seated.

and bade the man drive to Clement's Inn. This was immediately done; and Mr. Tims entered his chambers, and retired into its inmost recesses, to pause upon and consider the step that he had just been about to take.

This was no other than to wait upon Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson, and tender them Mr. Beauchamp's stamped acknowledgment of the receipt of ten thousand pounds from his uncle, in discharge of the ten thousand pounds which he had been directed to pay by Lord Ashborough, appropriating to himself, as his uncle's heir, the money which was thus left in his hands. The matter was susceptible of various points of view; for, though the law does not recognise the principle of any man helping himself in such a manner, yet we are informed by those who know better than ourselves, that it is very difficult, under many circumstances, to prevent him from doing so. There was one point, however, which greatly incommoded Mr. Tims—namely, that the acknowledgment in Mr. Beauchamp's hand was dated on the very day of the Ryebury murder, and thereby offered a strong presumption, that the money had really been placed in Captain Delaware's chamber by his cousin. Many important consequences might ensue, should Mr. Beauchamp reappear, and declare such to have been the fact; and although Mr. Tims sincerely hoped and trusted that he was at the bottom of the sea, yet, as it might happen that he was not, the lawyer, with laudable precaution, sat down to state to himself the results which would take place, in each of the two cases, if he were now to present his acknowledgment.

He found, therefore, that should Mr. Beauchamp never be heard of more, the case would go on against Captain Delaware, the suit in Chancery might proceed against Sir Sidney Delaware, the twenty-five thousand pounds he had got would remain in his hands, and, by presenting the acknowledgment, he would be enabled to retain possession of ten thousand pounds more. All this, therefore, was in favonr of acting as he had determined.

On the other hand, if Mr. Beauchamp did reappear—which he did not think likely—he began to suspect that Captain Delaware would be cleared, that the twenty-five thousand pounds would be transferred to Lord Ashborough, that the Emberton estate would be freed from all incumbrance, and that he would undoubtedly lose the twelve thousand pounds which had been stolen from his uncle, as well as Lord Ashborough's favour and business. "The more reason," he thought, "why I should immediately get this money, which undoubtedly did belong to my uncle! But, can I then continue the process against Captain Delaware," he continued,

"with such a strong presumption of his innocence in my own hands?"—and he looked at the note, which nearly amounted to positive proof.—"But what have I to do with that? It does not absolutely prove his innocence. The coroner's inquest has returned its verdict, and the law must take its course; besides, Henry Beauchamp is at the bottom of the sea, and a jury of fishes sitting on his own body by this time—Pshaw! I will present the acknowledgment to-morrow."

This doughty resolution Mr. Tims accordingly fulfilled, and at noon waited in person on Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson. He was shown into the private room of the latter, a seat was placed for him, and his business was asked.

"Why, Mr. Wilkinson," he replied, "I have first to explain to you an uncommonly awkward blunder, which took place by some forgetfulness on the part of my noble friend and client, the Earl of Ashborough, who, not adverting to the arrangements made between us, did not leave assets in my office to pay the bill drawn by you on Mr. Beauchamp's account. Had I been in town myself," he added, feeling wealthy, "of course I would have supplied the money; but I, like my noble friend and client, was out of town till yesterday."

"Rather unfortunate, indeed, Mr. Tims!" replied Mr. Wilkinson, drily, "especially as Mr. Beauchamp drew for the money. His letter was couched in such terms as to permit of our handing over the assets that were in our hands; but we cannot tell that he has not been put to great inconvenience. Lord Ashborough's note was of course protested—here it is! I hope you have come to retire it."

"I am directed by my Lord Ashborough to do so," answered the lawyer; "but I rather imagine that Mr. Beauchamp could not be put to much inconvenience; for I find by this document that he has obtained that sum, and four hundred and thirty-two pounds more, from my late unfortunate uncle, to whose property I have taken out letters of administration, and therefore, retaining the ten thousand pounds now in hand, I request you would hand me over the four hundred and thirty-two pounds at your convenience, when I will give you a receipt in full."

"Sir, this is somewhat unprecedented," replied Mr. Wilkinson, "and I think you will find that money cannot thus be stopped, in transitu, without form of law. Such proceedings, if once admitted, would open a door to the most scandalous abuses. You acknowledge that you are commissioned to pay us this money, on account of Lord Ashborough. Having done so, you will have every right to present your claim against

Mr. Beauchamp, which will, of course, be immediately examined and attended to."

Mr. Tims replied, and Mr. Wilkinson rejoined; but as it is more than probable that the reader may already have heard more than he desires of such a discussion, it will be unnecessary to say more than that Mr. Tims adhered to his first resolution, and carried off the sum he had in hand, leaving Mr. Wilkinson to send down to Lord Ashborough his protested bill, and Beauchamp's note of hand, if he pleased.

In the meantime, that noble lord proceeded, as fast as a light chariot and good horses could carry him, down to Emberton. It was dark, however, ere he arrived; and the first object that met his sight the following morning, as he looked forth from the windows of the inn, was the old mansion, at the end of its wide and solitary park, with the stream flowing calmly on, through the midst of the brown grass and antique trees, and the swans floating upon its bosom in the early light. He had not seen it since he was a mere youth, and the finger of time had written that sad word decay on the whole aspect of the place. To the Earl, through whose whole frame the same chilly hand had spread the growing stiffness of age, the sight was awfully sad, of the place where he had spent the most elastic days of life, and it was long ere he could withdraw his eyes, as he paused and contemplated every feature of the scene, and woke a thousand memories that had long slept in the night of the past.

When he was dressed and had breakfasted, he set out for the small village near which Henry Beauchamp's hat had been found. In his way, he stopped also at the house where the hunter had been left, identified the horse, and listened attentively to the replies which the landlord and servants made to the shrewd questions of an officer he brought with him from London.

The man's tale was very simple, and quite the same that he had given to Mr. Tims. He described Henry Beauchamp very exactly, declared that he had appeared grave and melancholy when he came there, and that he had never heard anything of him since. The servants told the same story; and Lord Ashborough only acquired an additional degree of gloom, from ascertaining in person the accuracy of the lawyer's report.

"He is gone!" he thought, as he returned to his carriage, giving way to despair in regard to his nephew. "He is gone! This Sidney Delaware is destined to be the blight of all my hopes and expectations. If it had not been for his vile intrigues to get quit of that annuity, all this would never have

happened; but I will make him rue it, should it cost me half my fortune."

No great information could be obtained upon the coast, although Lord Ashborough spent the whole day in fruitless inquiries, and although one of the officers of the coast-guard gave every assistance, with the keen and active intelligence of a sailor.

The only thing elicited, which seemed to bear at all upon the fate of Henry Burrel, was the fact, that one of the sailors, on the look-out about a week before, had heard, or fancied he heard, a man's voice calling loudly for help. So convinced had he been himself of the fact, that, with one of his comrades, he ran down the shore in the direction of the sounds; but he could discover nothing. It was a fine clear moonlight night, he said, so that he must have seen anything if there had been anything to see; but the sound only continued a moment, and on not finding any person, he had concluded that it was all the work of fancy.

With these scanty tidings, which, of course, only served to increase his apprehensions, Lord Ashborough was obliged to be satisfied for the time; and, returning to the inn at Emberton, he gave orders for printing placards, and inserting advertisements in the newspapers, each purporting that a large reward would be paid on the discovery of the body of a gentleman, supposed to be drowned, of whom a very accurate description was subjoined. The placards were pasted up all over the country, and Lord Ashborough himself remained two days at Emberton; but there was something in the aspect of the old mansion and the park that was painful to him. When he rose, there it was before his eyes; when he went out, there it stood, grave and grey, apparently in his very path; when he returned, he found it still sad and gloomy at his door. At length, satisfied that he had done all in his power to discover his nephew, he returned to town, leaving the police-officer behind him, with orders to spare neither trouble nor expense to ascertain the facts; and although the Earl himself did not choose to appear openly in the business of Captain Delaware, a private hint was conveyed to the officer through his lordship's valet, that, to aid the others who were upon the search, might be very advantageous to himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The great advantage of autobiography is, that a man never troubles his head about other people's affairs, but goes on with his own tale till he has done with it; whereas the unfortunate wretch who undertakes to tell the history of a number of other people, has no better a life of it than a whipper-in, and is obliged to be continually trotting up and down, flogging up his straggling characters to a pace with the rest. The reader, too, may get his brains most tremendously puzzled in the meantime. But what can be done? If people will not write their own stories, other people must write them for them, and the work must go on as best it may. Under these circumstances, we must request the gentle reader to bring back his mind, or his eyes, to the end of the seventeenth chapter, since which precise point we have neglected entirely the history of Henry Beauchamp. However, amends shall immediately be made to that gentleman, and he shall have the remainder of this volume to himself.

Let it be remembered, then, that he set out from the dwelling of the miser at Ryebury, promising that punctilious person to return, and sign at once the more formal and regular documents, for which the necessary stamps were still to be procured from Emberton—that he passed William Delaware on his road, concealing himself from him as he did so; and the reader, if he be so pleased, may dip his hand into the wallet of imagination, and take out his own particular little scheme, for leaving the money with which Beauchamp was burdened, in the chamber of—Blanche Delaware's brother.

Those three last words may seem periphrastic; but if the reader thinks they are so, he makes a mistake; for at that moment, it was not in the least as Captain William Delaware, a master and commander in his Majesty's navy, nor as the son of Sir Sidney Delaware of Emberton, baronet, nor in any other quality, shape, or capacity of any kind whatsoever, that Henry Beauchamp regarded him; but solely and wholly in relation to Blanche Delaware—or, in short, as the brother of her he loved. When he avoided him, it was because she had rejected his—Beauchamp's—offered hand; when he placed the money on the table at Emberton, it was, that the clouds which had so long obscured the sunshine of her days, might be scattered for ever; and Henry Beauchamp could no more

think of William Delaware, without the connecting link that bound him to his sister, than one can think of the planetary system without the sun.

When it was all done, however, and, having regained the shade of the park trees, Henry Beauchamp was strolling on, slow and sad, towards Ryebury, he bethought him of what was next to be done, as a consequence of the very things that were just accomplished. Let it be remarked that this was the first time he had thought of what was to follow; for the hurry and confusion of the whole day, which had just passed over his head, had left him no time for reflection, even had he been inclined to indulge in it; and the bitter disappointment he had suffered had given him no great taste for thought of any kind. All he had calculated, was the best means of arriving at his immediate object; and further than that, he had satisfied himself with the grand conscience-salve for all mad enterprises—

"He dared to say, all would go right!"

Now, however, when he began to consider the matter, it presented more difficulties than he had before perceived. He was quite romantic enough and wealthy enough to have given the money to his cousins, with pleasure in the gift, and without inconvenience from the consequences; but, from the delicacy of feeling natural to his own heart, he perfectly understood that neither Sir Sidney Delaware, nor any of his family, would be willing to receive such a sum from any one as a donation—especially from him, circumstanced as he was in regard to Miss Delaware. Disgusted and wearied with the delays and shuffling of the miser, and suspecting that his worthy uncle, Lord Ashborough, might have some share in producing the impediments, he had determined to put it out of the power of any one to prevent the payment, and consequently had acted as we have seen; but, now that he had done so, he found that it would be in no degree easy to give the matter the air of an ordinary transaction.

People who have met with few difficulties in their undertakings, soon teach themselves to trust the execution of anything they themselves find troublesome to others, and look upon their carrying it through easily as a matter of course; and as Beauchamp, though not in general given to 'insouciance,' was just then in a state of mental irritation and impatience, which rendered long reflection of any kind irksome to him, he determined to throw the burden of the business upon the shoulders of the miser. "I will tell him," he thought, "to write a note to William Delaware, the first thing to-morrow, informing him that he has sent the money by a friend to-night, and is ready to execute the legal docu-

ments in regard to the whole transaction." Having so far made his arrangements in his own mind, he walked on slowly, beginning to feel somewhat weary with his day's exertion; and, as he did so—every other subject which could force his thoughts from the most painful object they could choose being lost for the time—memory naturally led him back to dream of Blanche Delaware, and her strange and unaccountable conduct towards himself.

He walked on towards Ryebury, deviating slightly from the way, in order that he might not meet William Delaware on his return, and mingling vague, wild schemes for the future, with the bitter memories and regrets of the past. He would visit Greece, he thought—perhaps cross over the narrow strait, and wander through Syria and Judea, or penetrate into Armenia, and pause for awhile amongst the tribes whose patriarchal habits have been so beautifully depicted by Morier's entertaining pen, or even travel forward into India itself, and watch the slow customs of Europe forcing their way amidst the immemorial habits of the Hindoo. He would do anything, in short, for amusement—and forgetfulness.

When he at length approached the door of Mr. Tims' house, the moon had sunk considerably, though she had still some hours to shine; and, pouring her beams from the side, with the slightest possible angle of declination towards the back of the house, her light fell full upon the two steps that led up to the door, without lighting the door itself. Beauchamp thought he heard a noise in the passage as he approached; but with his usual indifference, certainly not decreased either by fatigue or grief, he walked on with the same slow pace in which he had before been proceeding, and was just in the act of laying his hand upon the bell, when the door was suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly thrown open. The faint outline of three men standing in the dim darkness of the passage was all that Beauchamp could perceive; but the moonlight poured full upon his own figure as he stood alone upon the steps. So unlooked-for a sight in the house of Mr. Tims caused him to pause in some surprise; and he had no time to recover from it; for before he could ask any question, or form any conjecture, he received a violent blow from some heavy instrument on the head, which instantly felled him to the ground, completely stunned and motionless.

How long he continued in that state, Beauchamp could hardly tell; but when he again recovered his consciousness, he found himself lying extended upon some planks, with a stiff and numb sensation over all his limbs, a violent headache, and extreme pain in his ancle while a rippling sound and

buoyant undulating motion seemed to show that he was in a boat upon the water. For the first moment he could not verify this supposition by sight, as he seemed to have been cast carelessly into the boat, and his hat was driven so far over his brows as to prevent him from seeing anything around.

Before he was well aware of what he was doing, he started up, pushing back the covering from his eyes; but, as he did so, his unsteady footing in the boat, together with the violent pain in his ancle, made him lose his balance, and very nearly fall over into the sea, which received his hat as he fell, and bore it far away in a moment.

With an involuntary groan from the pain he suffered, Beauchamp relapsed into his former position; but the single instant he had been able to stand up, had shown him sufficient to make him comprehend in a great degree his immediate situation. The moon, he had remarked, just about to dip below the horizon, was pouring a long line of yellow light over the waves that, rippling away in the far perspective, seemed like living things of gold, dancing joyfully in the beams, while over all the rest of the expanse was to be seen nothing else but the dark mass of agitated waters heaving up and down with a dull but solemn sound. He had just caught a glimpse, too, of a faint line of high coast stretching away to the north-west, and consequently catching upon its most prominent points the beams of the setting moon, while all the rest remained in dim grey shadow. Such had been the more distant objects that Beauchamp had beheld. Those more immediately around him were the small open boat in which he was borne along, and four figures that it contained. Of these—one of which was that of a woman—two appeared to be death sick, and the other two sat close beside each other in silence at the stern of the boat. One was steering, the other gazing fixedly over the side upon the flashing waters; but the movement of Beauchamp instantly called the eyes of both, though neither made any observation even when he fell back again upon the planks. After he had lain there for a moment or two more, however, the one who was unoccupied whispered something to the steersman. The other made no reply, and the whisper was repeated. The steersman then broke forth with a fearful oath, adding, "If you offer to touch a hair of his head, I will heave you overboard, and send you to hell an hour before your time!"

His companion muttered something which Beauchamp did not hear, and the sailor again replied in the same angry tone, "Come, come, rouse out none of your slack-jaw at me,

or blast me if I do not show you who commands here. You have got your way with me once to-night to my own damnation, but you shall not do it again!"

Here the matter dropped, and all was silent but the ripple of the waters. Half an hour more elapsed without a word being spoken; and though Beauchamp felt very giddy and confused, he endeavoured to think over the circumstances in which he was placed, and form some plan for his demeanour towards those by whom he was surrounded.

Although he had very few facts to lead him to such a conclusion, yet something more than a suspicion of the truth crossed his mind. The peculiar whistling he had heard, both in going to and coming from Ryebury, joined with the appearance of the three men in the passage of the miser's house at that time of night—the assault upon himself, and his situation at the very moment, all made him conclude that a bold and extensive robbery had been committed, and that he had been carried away from an apprehension that he might give the alarm, and lead to the detection of the robbers.

His companions remained silent for near an hour, and the only words which then broke the stillness were spoken by the steersman, who seemed to be the only seaman of the party. "If she be not under the lee of Jerry's Knocker, we must run for old Willy Small's, that's all. We are sure enough with him, and to-morrow we can get another boat, and so across."

The other made no reply, and very likely did not understand clearly what his companion meant. Beauchamp, however, who had in his youth frequented that part of the country, and, as the reader may have perceived, had forgotten but little of the localities, instantly remembered that a long promontory, jutting out from the rest of the coast, and having a calm sheltered bay to the eastward, bore throughout the country the name of Jerry's Knocker; and he was led to conclude, from the rest of the sentence, that the respectable people into whose hands he had fallen were looking out for some smuggling vessel to carry them to France.

It very speedily became evident that whatever they were seeking was not to be found. The sea began soon to run high off the headland, and shortly after grew far calmer than before, leading Beauchamp to imagine—though he could see nothing around—that they had doubled the point; but the words, "She's weighed, by ——," at once showed that the vessel was gone; and the steersman, who had been anxiously looking out, resumed his seat, and brought his boat a point nearer to the wind.

In about half an hour afterwards the pitching of the boat ceased almost entirely, and it was clear she was entering smooth water; while a warning to be quiet, given somewhat sharply by the steersman to one of the sea-sick personages, who was now inclined to speak, showed that they were approaching some spot where other ears might be on the watch.

"Run up to yonder light," said the steersman, in a low voice, "tell the old man that I am here, and bid him come down and lend a hand."

"Why don't you go yourself?" asked the other, in the same whispered tone. "He doesn't know any of us."

"Because I do not choose," answered the other; and the person to whom he spoke at once obeyed. Ere two minutes had elapsed, a considerable addition was made to their party, and the steersman himself, now springing ashore, held a low consultation with those who joined them. The other man and the woman, whom Beauchamp had observed, were next taken out of the boat, and in a moment after a stout old man jumped in, and stirred him by the shoulder. "Come, master!" he said, "you must get out, and come along with us—though you seem to take things vastly quiet."

"I suppose it is the best thing I can do," replied Beauchamp. "But if you want me out, you must carry me out, my good fellow, for they have lamed me, and I cannot stand."

"That's a bad job!" replied the other, speaking in a rough but kindly tone. "Wat will be sorry for that; for they did not intend to hurt you, I can tell you."

"Perhaps not," said Beauchamp; "though knocking me down, and stunning me on the spot, were not very unlikely to hurt me."

"Ay, but if a man will poke his nose into what he has no business with, master," replied the other, "he must take what he gets."

"Very true!" answered Beauchamp, drily, though somewhat surprised at the fellow's coolness. "Very true, indeed! But it was purely accidental on my part. I had not the slightest intention of intruding upon the gentlemen in the pursuit of their avocations. But, as I said before, if you mean me to get out of this boat—and I am heartily tired of it—you must carry me; for I can only stand upon one leg, and the ground is somewhat uneven."

"True enough!" answered the man. "Here, Bill, lend us a hand to lift the lad out of the boat. They have broke his leg, amongst them. It will teach you, master, to keep out of the way when there is anything to be run upon the coast. Always sheer off when you see what's going on.

But we will get it spliced for you, never fear. Here, Bill, I say!"

A youth of about seventeen or eighteen now came up and helped his father, as it proved the old man was, to lift the stranger on shore. Beauchamp then, with the assistance of the elder personage, made his way from the little sandy cove into which the boat had been run, to a lonely house, standing high up upon the bank, with two boats drawn up, nearly to the door, and about a square yard of cabbage-garden at the back. The old smuggler led his unwilling guest in, and was about to conduct him into a room, the door of which opened at a right angle with that which entered from the shore. Various signs and symbols, however, within the chamber, made the man pause ere he went in; and at length he exclaimed, as he still stood in the entrance—"Well, well! But give us a candle, though! How the devil can one see up the stairs? It's as dark as Davy's locker!"

Beauchamp made as much use of his eyes as possible; but it was in vain that he did so, for the persons that the room contained were concealed from his sight by the half-closed door; and all that he could distinguish was part of the common interior of a fisherman's kitchen—a large chest, a deal table, a wide fireplace, and two shelves covered with clean blue-edged plates and porringers, together with a vial bottle, half full of ink, and having a pen stuck in the top of it, pendent by a bit of string from the corner of one of the shelves.

A moment after, a clean, little, well-salted fisherman's wife, emerged from behind the door, with a brazen candlestick and three inches of lighted candle in her hand; and Beauchamp, conducted upstairs with no inconsiderable agony, was ushered into a small bedroom (of which there appeared to be four, by the way), which, amidst all its faults and deficiencies, was at least clean.

As they went up the stairs, and for a moment after they entered the room, the eyes of the smuggler continued to run over his guest's apparel and face with a look of surprise, and even anxiety, which increased at every glance; and when he had done, there was a change in his whole demeanour which might have made Beauchamp smile at any other time, or under any other circumstances. He now, however, threw himself down in a chair, exhausted with the pain his exertion had caused him, and was about to demand that a surgeon should be sent for, when the old man, setting down the candle on the table, told him, with a tone of respectful civility, that he would return in a moment, and left him.

"Lock the door!" shouted a voice from below, as the

smuggler quitted the room. The door accordingly was locked; and Beauchamp, left alone, before he proceeded to think over his present situation, according to his usual deliberate custom, set to work to get his boot off, and see what was really the state of his ankle.

His leg, however, was so much swelled, that all ordinary efforts were vain, although he never committed that piece of exuberant impolicy, the wearing a tight boot. As soon as he discovered this to be the case, he took his penknife from his pocket, and at once relieved his foot and leg from their leathern prison. He was then about to proceed in his examination, when steps coming from below interrupted him; but another door was opened, and in a moment after he heard the voice of the old smuggler, and that of the man who had steered the boat, conversing together somewhat eagerly. At first, as usual, there was a guard upon their tongues, and all that reached his ear was a sort of hum; but soon the caution wore away; they spoke loud, and Beauchamp, without the desire or the capability of moving from the chair in which he had first sat down, heard distinctly the greater part of all that passed.

"Well, well, Wat!" said the voice of the old man, "D—me if I'm a man to leave a poor boy at a pinch! We must just get the cutter run down: but she cannot be here, you know, till to-morrow night, anyhow. It must be a bad job, though, that makes you so wild to get to France, my boy."

"A bad job enough! a bad job enough!" answered a voice, that Beauchamp now remembered full well. "But mark ye, William Small, when ye hear it all told—Mark ye, I say! I had nothing to do with the worst part of it. Those two fellows below have cheated me, and made a wretch of me. Hang me, if I would not rather have gone up to the main chains and gone pitch over, head-foremost, into the Bay of Biscay. But they did it—not I—mind that!"

"I'd bet a puncheon they've killed the officer," replied the other.

"Don't ask any questions, Willy Small!" replied his companion; "don't ask any questions—it is safer for us all!"

"Why, that's true enough!" replied the smuggler. "No, no! I'll not ask nor guess either, and then I know nothing about it, but that you and t'others wanted the cutter to go a pleasuring; and I'll take the lowest price, you see, too, Watty, so they can't bring me in as art and part for the run goods. But what is to be done with the young man in the next room? Why, Wat, he seems a gentleman, I say!"

"Ay! he is a gentleman every inch of him," answered the

other; "and such a one as one seldom sees—I would not have harm happen to him for the world—why you must just keep him for a day or two, till we are gone and safe, and then let him go. But I say, when you lock the door to-night upon him, keep you the key yourself, mind you. Those fellows below have an ill-will to him; and if it had not been for me, they would have pitched him overboard this blessed night—upon my soul they would!"

"D—n their eyes and limbs!" exclaimed the other; "I should like to see them touch him in my house. If I would not tie them together, like a couple of hogsheads, and sink them out of water-mark. But as to locking the door, Wat, there is no use of that at all, bless ye. He can't stir an inch. Why, you've broken his leg amongst you!"

The reply of the other, though sufficiently blasphemous—and we must here apologise to the more scrupulous reader for admitting into the dialogues just past so many profane expletives, which we would not perhaps have done, having no delight in such matter ourselves, had not the love of truth and accuracy prevailed—the reply of the other then, though sufficiently blasphemous, showed that he was bitterly grieved for the accident which had happened to Beauchamp; and a long conversation ensued in regard to the necessity of sending for a surgeon.

That, however, they both agreed would "blow the whole business"—to use their own expression—and humanity, as usual, gave way to apprehension. Old Willy Small, as the smuggler was denominated, declared that he was a-goodish hand himself at splicing a broken limb, and that he and his wife would look to it, till the other party were safe off to France. This seemed to quiet the conscience of the other upon that particular; and, after concerting some further plans for facilitating all the preparations for their journey, they returned to their comrades below.

The effect of this conversation upon the mind of Henry Beauchamp was not certainly to produce any very agreeable sensations. He began to apprehend that a worse crime than simple robbery had been committed at the house of the unhappy miser; and though, in one point of view, he felt little anxiety on his own account—seeing evidently that he would not want assistance at his need, if anything were attempted against him—yet he could not help shuddering at his proximity to a gang of murderers, and contemplated with no great pleasure the surgical offices to be performed upon his own leg by a smuggler and an old woman. An evil, however, is seldom without its good; and though, certainly, had it been left to his own choice, he might have found a more agreeable

way of diverting his thoughts from all the painful subjects that previously occupied them, yet true it most assuredly is, that corporeal uncomfort, pain, and apprehension, did very materially lessen——no! not his love for Blanche Delaware—but the first bitter feeling of the disappointment which her conduct had occasioned.

If it were not so strange to say, and if we could by any means discover the process by which the mind could arrive at such a result, we should declare that, in the midst of all these dangers, troubles, and uncomforts of a different kind, Beauchamp had found a new store of hope. How, or why, who can tell? but either his hope was like the limbs of the skeleton in the Fantoccini, which, after being all disjointed, are suddenly pulled together again by strings that no one can see; or else it was like a fire of dry wood, which, when it has appeared for some time quite extinguished, will pour out a small white flame, when nobody is expecting any such thing, and soon be as bright again as ever. At all events, he had left Emberton that very morning without a spark of hope apparently left; and after going through as much as would have contented him with adventures for the whole of his life, he could not help thinking that there was something very strange and unaccountable in Blanche Delaware's whole conduct, and that if he could but get the key, all might still go well. Nevertheless, he was not left long to cogitate upon anything; for in a minute or two, the smuggler and the smuggler's wife walked in, in the character of surgeon and assistant; and, after some awkward explanations of their purpose, demanded to look at the gentleman's leg, to see if they could help him. As he knew that it was predetermined not to send for a surgeon, Beauchamp, who was not disposed to make people look foolish unnecessarily, did not, as he once intended, propose that expedient.

"You may look at my leg as much as you like, my good people," he said; "but I have not the slightest intention of letting you do anything to it, unless what you propose agrees with my own opinion." This being settled, the woman knelt down, and the man held the candle, and the stocking being withdrawn, an examination and mumbled consultation of some length took place.

"It's not broken, sir, do you see!" said the old man, looking up. "It's only the small bone put out, do you see!"

"I see nothing at all, my good fellow," replied Beauchamp, "except that it is very painful; and, of course, the more you pinch it the worse it is."

The man then assured him that if he would let him try, he would put it in, in a minute; and, after a laborious explana-

tion, Beauchamp consented. The old man pulled his foot as if he would have pulled it off: the old woman squeezed his ankle as if she would have broken it through the middle; but at length, with a sudden snap, the bone started back into its place, and the patient found instant relief. Every attempt to stand, however, was still quite out of the question; and Beauchamp, giving himself entirely up into the hands of such skilful chirurgeons, suffered his ankle to be bandaged up with cloths steeped in vinegar and brandy, and himself to be carried to bed, where the smuggler assured him he ought to lie for at least four days, in order to perfect his recovery. When all was completed, and his host and hostess were retiring, Beauchamp listened for a moment, and heard the key of the door turned with greater satisfaction than he had imagined the fact of being locked into his own room would ever afford him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Beauchamp was a great deal too sincere a man, even in his commnne with himself, to endeavour by any means to cheat himself into the belief that he was a hero. In short, he had quite sufficient real enthusiasm in his disposition, and quite sufficient contempt for those who affected it without having any, to make him very jealous of letting the portion he did possess appear openly, even before his own eyes; and, in order to correct such propensities, he had got up, as we have shown before, a system of apathetic indifference to everything that did not affect himself, which, though sometimes run away with by his zeal or his affections, contrived generally to bridle feelings that would otherwise have been somewhat headstrong.

Left alone in a little bed, in a little room in a smuggler's cottage, on the loneliest part of the sea-shore—locked in, without being able to set a foot to the ground—without a light—and with a confounded smell of fish pervading the whole atmosphere—his first impulse, as all these minor miseries tickled his imagination one after the other, was to laugh heartily. But the impression lasted but a moment; and, when he thought of the more remote, but more dreadful, circumstances connected by an inseparable link with his temporary situation—the murder of a helpless old man, which he doubted not had been committed—the fearful moral offence

which three of his fellow-creatures had perpetrated—and the miserable fate of a youth in whom he had taken considerable interest—for he had recognised, as we have before hinted, the voice of poor Wat Harrison—when he thought of all these circumstances, his heart smote him for the moment of levity in which he had indulged; and poured out the full tide of its generous and kindly feelings to wash away the fault of that one instant.

He now revolved the matter more seriously; and as he did so, of course his own situation came again soberly under consideration. That situation was evidently anything but pleasant; for no man could be expected to find his pillow very soft when it was shaken by the hands of a gang of murderers. But Beauchamp was constitutionally a brave man. His impulses were not those of fear; and, though he had a very considerable share of imagination, yet when he wanted to frighten himself about anything, he had to think of it seriously, and call up all the dangers one by one. Now, in the present instance, there were so many unpleasant and perilous points in his position, which he could neither divert nor avoid, that, after a short reflection, he found it would be best and wisest not to think of the danger at all; and, when he had so settled the matter, he found no great difficulty in forgetting it altogether, although, with a degree of feverish restlessness, he turned and re-turned in his mind the conversation which he had heard in the adjoining room.

It was evident that Walter Harrison had not told the whole truth to the old man who had given them shelter; and whether it was the smuggler's previous conclusions that had led him to believe the crime, from the consequences of which the young sailor was flying, had been committed in an endeavour to defraud the revenue, or whether by a direct falsehood on the lad's own part, Beauchamp naturally deduced from everything which he had discovered, that Willy Small, as they called him, would be the first to shrink from the perpetrators of the deeper offence which had really been offered to the laws of God and man. This was, at least, some consola tion; and although Beauchamp still felt a sensation of awe and horror when he reflected calmly on the whole transactions of that night, yet his feelings were more like those of one who reads a horrid tale of crime and sorrow in the newspapers, than those of one around whose very person the circumstances had been transacted, and who was, in some degree, a party to the whole.

Nevertheless, he could not go to sleep over it with the easy carelessness of one of those daily devourers of manufactured horrors, who join to patronise the periodical press

with the devout idolators of agitation, and who, like men fed upon devilled gizzards, find that nothing on earth has enough cayenne. Whether it was busy thoughts, or a broken head, or an ankle that had been dislocated, that kept him awake, I cannot tell; but he lay in feverish and uneasy restlessness long after all was quiet in the house, and even the murderers had retired—I had almost said—to sleep.

Towards morning, exhaustion overcame all, and he slept long and profoundly. How long indeed he did not know, for he had forgot to wind up his watch; but, at all events, he woke refreshed and calm, his headache gone, and the pain of his hurt ankle so much relieved, that he fancied he could do anything, and at once sprang out of bed. He instantly found his mistake; for the moment he attempted to set that foot to the ground, he reeled, and would have fallen but for his hold of the bedstead; and, on examining more closely, he found his leg enormously swelled, and bidding fair, as the smuggler had predicted, to confine him to the house for more than one day. Notwithstanding this discovery, he determined to make his way to the window before any one interrupted him, in order to examine the locale, and what was passing without; and by means of the table and the chairs, he contrived to effect his purpose.

The scene that presented itself was one that may be met with about once every three miles along the greater part of the southern and eastern coasts of England—a small sandy bay, opening out into the wide blue sea, with two or three high cliffs on either hand, and nothing more. In the present instance, however, an object struck the eyes of Henry Beauchamp, which was not without its peculiar interest. It was a small low-rigged cutter, just making her way out to sea, with a full steady wind, and a press of sail. He looked up to the sky, and, as far as he could judge from the position of the sun, concluded that one or two hours must have passed since noon. At the same time, there was no sound of voices below. A lad was seen mending one of the boats on the shore; and a man, in whom he easily distinguished the old smuggler, was standing on the nearest bank, with a glass to his eye, either watching the progress of the cutter, or examining a vessel that ould just be seen hull down in the offing. All seemed to imply that those who had brought him thither had effected their escape from England; and after gazing out for a moment, he returned to his bedside, and proceeded to dress himself as well as he could. The gentleman who threaded the Dædalion labyrinth, and slew Mrs. Pasiphæ's illegitimate son at the end of it, had not half such a piece of work of it as Henry Beauchamp had to get into his clothes. It is wonderful how much

more use one makes of one's foot even in dressing one's self than one knows anything about; and what would have come of it in the present instance can hardly be divined, had it not so happened that, after Beauchamp had struggled with innumerable difficulties for nearly half an hour, the old smuggler presented himself, as a somewhat rude valet-de-chambre, and saved his guest from martyrdom.

The old man, in his quality of surgeon, blamed Beauchamp highly for getting up at all; and, pointing out the swelled state of his ankle, declared that he would only let him remain up on condition that he would keep it raised upon a chair during the rest of the day.

Beauchamp was perhaps a little irritable with the contention he had just gone through with various parts of his apparel; and, consequently, seating himself calmly on the nearest chair, he informed the old man, in a cool determined tone, that it was his intention immediately to proceed to Dorchester, which, as far as he could calculate, was the nearest large town. He was met by the smuggler, however, in a way that he did not expect, and this, of course, gave a sudden change to the current of his feelings. Instead of telling him that he could not go, or that he should not go, or any of those things which would have rendered him more determined than ever, the old man replied, in a civil tone, "Well, sir, you can do as you like; but I don't see how you can manage it to-night, for it is now near four—Dorchester's twenty miles off—and even were I to send for a shay, it can't come down within two mile of this place, 'cause there is no road."

"Past four, is it?" cried Beauchamp. "I must have slept sound."

"I daresay you were tired enough, sir," replied the old man; "but it is past four, indeed—and, as I was saying, Dorchester is twenty miles, and the next town is ten. You are very welcome to your bed, sir; and I think you had a great deal better stay till you can walk a bit."

Beauchamp mused; for his situation was certainly a very unpleasant one. He knew it to be his duty to give immediate information of what had occurred to himself, to those persons who might investigate the matter thoroughly, and discover whether a greater offence had not been committed. At the same time, he felt the impossibility of walking two miles, if his life had been at stake; while he did not think it would be either wise or safe to intrust to a man of so doubtful a character as this Willy Small, even his suspicions in regard to persons, with one of whom, at least, the smuggler was on terms of friendship. It was impossible to say what the fear of being implicated in such a transaction as Beauchamp believed

to have taken place, might cause him to do, if he found that he had in his power the only person who could prove his connection with the culprits. At the same time, the man's tone was perfectly civil, and even kind; and as soon as Beauchamp found that no opposition was intended to the exercise of his free will, he of course dropped the more peremptory manner he had assumed, and determined to try milder means instead, though he well knew that no measures would have proved successful had the smuggler made up his mind to risk after-consequences in order to gain the present object.

"If these places be so far by land," he said, at length, "is it not possible that I can get a boat to carry me to the next town on the coast?—I see two lying there upon the beach; and I will pay well for one, if it can be procured."

"Why, sir, for the matter of that," answered the smuggler, "one of the boats has not been seaworthy these three months, and the other unfortunately got badly damaged this morning in taking those fellows and the woman to the cutter. They would not wait till high water, and seemed in a devil of a hurry to get aboard; and how my boy managed it, or whether the old un had a hand in it, I don't know, but they had all near been swamped, and the boat can't be reckoned on, d'ye see!"

Beauchamp's lip curled, as he thought he perceived a determination to oppose his departure by fair means, if not by force; but the smuggler instantly caught it, and interpreting it aright, replied with a glowing cheek and a look of candour, that went further to convince his hearer than all the oratory or bullying in the world would have done.

"Well, well! I see what it is," he said. "You think that I want to keep you, while those fellows sheer off clear. But they are gone, and that's done; and sorry am I that I ever saw their faces, for I've a notion that there's somewhat worse at bottom than I thought for. But never mind that. Your honour's a gentleman, at least such I take you to be; and d— me if I have a hand in stopping your going wherever you like. If you like to get under weigh to-night, why, I say nothing; and I will even send the boy Bill over to —— for horses and a shay, though I think you had better stay here, a devil of a deal; and as for the boat, you may hop down and look at her yourself, and you will see that it will be this time to-morrow before all's right again. So your honour may just do as you like—I say nothing, do you see."

"You have said enough to make me believe you an honest man," replied Beauchamp; "and if what I suspect of your late inmates be true, you may find my testimony in your favour no slight matter. What they have done," he added,

seeing the old man's curiosity awakened, "I can only suspect, as you do yourself. All I know, of my own personal knowledge, is that, as I was accidentally coming upon them unawares, they thought fit to knock me down, and brought me hither; but I should certainly think you would find it most safe and most creditable to go immediately to the next magistrate and give information."

"No!" cried the smuggler—"No, I won't peach; and, besides, I know nothing about them."

"I am well aware, my good friend," replied Beauchamp, "that you have been deceived; for I will tell you fairly that I heard unwillingly all that passed between you and the young sailor, in the next room, last night. Take my word for it, however, that there has been no smuggling in the business."

The man started, but Beauchamp went on,—"Smuggling had nothing to do with it; but as I know that your ideas of honour are very different from mine, I shall not of course press you to inform against men, whose crime you do not fully know, and whose guilt I myself could not clearly prove. Nevertheless, I must do my duty, and, well or ill, I must make my way to Dorchester to-morrow, in executing which purpose I am sure you will aid me."

"I will, sir!" answered the old man. "I will leave Bill to mend the boat, and I will set out for —— by daylight, and you shall have a shay down at the red stile by two o'clock at furthest. No! no! I will never peach against a poor lad who trusted me; but somehow, what your honour has said has made me feel a little queerish—I should like to know the truth of the business vastly—I don't like these jobs—anything in the way of business I don't mind—but I don't like these jobs at all!"

It was very evident, from the changed and anxious countenance which the old smuggler now presented, that what he said was very true; and though he could talk with the utmost coolness of killing a king's officer in a smuggling brawl, yet the vague and doubtful nature of the transactions into which he had been unwittingly entrapped, filled him with anxious apprehensions.

"Well, my good friend," replied Beauchamp, whose object was not to alarm him too much on his own account, "at all events you have nothing to do with it, and I can bear witness to the conversation which took place between you and the young sailor last night, and which would at any time establish your ignorance of the whole facts."

"Thank your honour!" cried the old man, with evident heartfelt satisfaction. "Your honour's a gentleman—that you are; and I am sure that I would do anything your honour

tells me—that's to say, I wouldn't like to peach, d'ye see—but anything else."

"All that can be required of you," replied Beauchamp, "is not to obstruct the course of justice; and, therefore, I shall trust to you to set out as early as possible to-morrow to get me some conveyance; and further, should you be called upon hereafter to give evidence in this business, take my advice, and tell the whole truth boldly and straightforwardly; for depend upon it, to tell a falsehood, or to prevaricate, is the most dishonourable thing a man can do, whether his station be high or low."

"That it is, sir, surely!" replied the smuggler; "and I will tell the truth when I am asked. But that is different, your honour knows, from going and telling without any one asking me."

"Certainly it is," said Beauchamp; "and I do not ask you to do more than tell it when it is asked. But now, my good sir, can I get dinner, or breakfast as it is to me? for I begin to feel that I have not eaten anything for several hours."

"Now, that's what I call being d——d stupid!" cried Willy Small, much to Beauchamp's surprise, who at first concluded that the smuggler's censure was addressed to him. "If my old woman did not send me up on purpose to tell your honour that she had done you three mackerel, and that, with a rasher of pickled pork, and some fried——"

"Good Heaven!" cried Beauchamp, "I trust that she does not intend me to eat three mackerel, pickled pork, and fried anything!—But never mind—let me see them by all means. I will eat what I can, and she must excuse me the rest."

Beauchamp's dinner was accordingly placed before him; and with his usual perversity of disposition, it must be acknowledged that, in a smuggler's cottage, with a lame leg, and disappointed in love, he ate a better dinner of mackerel in October, salted pork, and fried eggs, than he had done since he left the Grand St. Bernard. There's a hero! Ulysses was nothing to him, though, dressed in a dishclout, the hero of the Odyssey did sit down with twenty fellows who were making love to his own wife, and supped heartily upon the "entrails fat, enriched with blood," by which Homer undoubtedly meant black puddings.

When he had concluded—as Beauchamp could, when he liked it, cast off his reserve, mingle freely with all classes, and examine nature wherever he found it—he declared that, as the evening was somewhat chilly, he would come down and spend the rest of it by the kitchen fire; and getting to the

bottom of the stairs the best way he could, by the help of the old man and his son, he soon rendered himself familiar with the whole family, winning their love, while he made them more and more inclined to declare that he was really a gentleman.

Nor did the time pass unpleasantly to himself. He had got a notion, in direct opposition to generally received opinions, that nature was to be found only in the highest and in the lowest classes—more especially, indeed, in the highest, because the persons of which it is constituted have little inducement to conceal their feelings or thoughts, and certainly no wish to affect the manners of any other caste. Nature, however, as modified by the education of the lower classes, was more interesting to him, from being less frequently before his eyes; and, though he certainly liked the nature of his own rank best, yet he was not sorry occasionally to observe the other a little nearer. Thus the time wore imperceptibly away; and the more tranquil passing of the night was only interrupted by the smuggler's son showing his father a powder-flask which, he said, one of the gentlemen had dropped upon the beach that morning. Beauchamp took it carelessly in his hand, and returned it without observation; but a single glance had shown him that it was one which, from some fault in its construction, he had given to his servant, Harding, a few days before. The sight, though it but confirmed former suspicions, threw him into a fit of musing for several minutes; but he shook it off as fast as possible, and soon resumed the easy tone in which he had been previously conversing.

The next morning he woke earlier than the day before, but he found, from the smuggler's son, that the old man, true to his word, had already set out to procure a post-chaise for him from the nearest town. Many an hour passed by, however, without his return, and it was again nearly four o'clock ere Beauchamp, whose sole amusement had been looking out upon the ever-varying sea, beheld him walking sturdily along over the high grounds to the west. He was soon down the little path, and into the house; but Beauchamp remarked that he paused not below, as he naturally might have done, to speak with his wife, but, on the contrary, with a hurried pace, proceeded straight upstairs, and entered the stranger's room at once. He was far too much agitated to think of ceremonies; and, leaning on the table without taking off his hat, he stood before Beauchamp, pale, trembling, and out of breath, for several moments before he could utter a word.

"Oh, your honour!" he cried, at length—"Oh, your

honour! I hope to God you will stand my friend—for this is a horrible business I have got into, and, without help, I shall sink—that's certain!"

"What is the matter? What has happened?" demanded Beauchamp, eagerly; but then, seeing the fearful state of agitation which shook the old man's powerful frame, he added, "Calm yourself! Calm yourself, Small! You have done nothing that I know of that can injure you! Let me hear what it is alarms you!"

"Thank you, sir, for that!" replied the smuggler, catching at Beauchamp's consolation. "Thank you for that! If you stand by me, I dare say I shall do. But what is it that alarms me, you ask. Why, what should it be! Why, when I went into the town of ——, what should I see but a number of people standing round the town-hall, just at a particular spot like; and something misgave me, so I went up, and there I saw stuck up against the wall a large sheet of paper, and at the top was printed, 'Five Hundred Pounds Reward;' and then, when I looked below, I saw, in bigger letters still, 'Murder!' At first I could not see any more, my brain turned round so; but when I could read on, I saw in the 'Blagard,' as the people called it, how those infernal villains, who were here the night afore last, had murdered a poor old helpless man at a place they call Ryebury. It did not just say it was them, indeed, but I am sure it was. Oh, I am quite sure it was them!"

The last declaration of his conviction was made more faintly, as if he entertained some slight hope that Beauchamp would contradict him; but, on the contrary, that gentleman replied, "I am afraid it was, indeed; for it was at that very place, Ryebury, and at the door of that old man's house, that they met me, and stunned me by a blow on the head. But what more did the placard say?"

"Oh, it mentioned a Captain Somebody!" replied the smuggler. "I forget the name. It was a Frenchified name, however. It was that black-looking —— with the whiskers, I'll bet a puncheon!"

"Was it Harding?" demanded Beauchamp, fixing his eyes upon him eagerly, to catch his answer from his look, even before he had time to utter it.

"No, no, no!" answered the smuggler. "It was not Harding. It was some Frenchified name; and then there came some person or persons unknown. But now your honour will stand by me, I am sure: for if the justices find out that I have helped them off the coast, they will make me out as having a hand in it; and I am sure that if I had known what they had been doing, I would sooner have scuttled the

cutter, and sent them all to the bottom, if I had gone down with them myself."

"I really believe you would," replied Beauchamp; "and I do not think that, with the evidence which I can give, and which I will give in your favour, should anything be brought against you, there is the slightest cause for your entertaining any apprehension."

"Thank you, sir! Thank you for that!" replied the smuggler. "That will make me easy, and now I'll go and tell the old woman."

"But stay, stay, my good friend!" cried Beauchamp. "Is the post-chaise——"

"Lord-a'-mercy, now!" cried the man, before his guest could finish the sentence, at the same time pulling off his hat, and throwing it down upon the ground with a despairing sort of fling. "Lord-a'-mercy, now, if I did not forget all about it! This murder has turned my brain, I do think; for I never went into a house or shed in the whole place, but set off home as hard as I could go, to ask if your honour would stand by me."

"Humph!" said Beauchamp, "this is pleasant."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Well," thought Beauchamp, "I certainly did calculate upon being at Dorchester to-night, as firmly as if I had never read the 'Rambler.' Oh, Seged, Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia! But never mind! to-morrow, at all events, nothing shall stop me, and by that time this leg of mine will be nearly well, so that some advantage at least will be gained by the disappointment."

The following morning the son, instead of the father, was accordingly despatched to the post-town of ——, to order down a chaise to the nearest point of the high-road; and he was, moreover, directed to take advantage of the conveyance, to return so far upon his way, in order to give Beauchamp notice of its arrival. This precaution was not unnecessary, for the boy was a lout who might very probably have suffered the chaise to go on without him; but having taken these measures, Beauchamp very confidently expected to hear that his vehicle was in waiting at or about the hour of two.

His lameness had by this time so far worn off, that he could move from place to place with tolerable ease; and he

spent the morning principally on the sea-shore, partly in thoughts which were all the busier from the forced inactivity of his body, partly in removing any remaining traces of apprehension from the mind of the old smuggler, who continued working leisurely and lazily at his boat, the damage done to which had evidently been considerable. A little before two o'clock, Beauchamp settled his accounts with his hostess; and all charges being left to his own liberality, and his purse being luckily and miraculously still in his pocket, he presented the worthy dame with a sum so much above either her expectations, or the value of her mackerel and pickled pork, as, in the first place, to make her turn red with surprise and satisfaction, and then to run out to tell her husband what the stranger had given them. Two o'clock, however, passed, and old Billy Small began to regret that he had sent young Billy Small, instead of going himself. Three o'clock passed, and Beauchamp joined most sincerely in the regret, especially when he heard the old man exclaim, in the tone of a discovery, "I'd bet a puncheon, now, that Bill has gone and got drunk at the 'lection. I forgot this was the first day of the 'lection for the borough, or I would ha' gone myself, to a certainty. He's drunk, no doubt!"

Towards half-past three, the good youth appeared lumbering over the hill, and entered the cottage, wiping his brow, indeed, but with a sober pace. In answer to Beauchamp's inquiries—which were made with more eager haste than he generally indulged in—the young man replied, that all the horses in the town, and for many miles round it, were engaged in the 'lection, so that not one was to be got for love or money.

Now, Beauchamp found himself so strongly inclined to be cross, that—instead of either sending all elections to that distinguished personage who has gained more by them and their consequences than any one else—I mean the devil—or vituperating the post-horses, or any of the other things concerned, as some persons would have done when put out of temper by similar mischances—he acted, of course, in a way of his own, and laughed outright, merely exclaiming, "Well, I must buy a shirt of you, Small, if you will sell me one; for at present I certainly do not come within the old beau's definition of a gentleman!"

As Beauchamp now determined to send no more to a town in which the election of a fit and proper person to represent his Majesty's lieges in Parliament was going on, his next questions related to the boat, or rather to the boats. The smaller of the two, old Small assured him, though it served well enough to catch mackerel in the little sheltered bay

before the house, would never do to go any distance; but he promised Beauchamp that the other boat should be ready to carry him to the next coast town by three o'clock on the following day.

Beauchamp, from what he had seen in the morning, imagined that the old man's promise might very well be fulfilled; but he little knew what mending an old boat is. Father and son set to work upon it at once, and went on as long as they could see; and, when the young stranger rose next morning, he found them already occupied in the same manner. His ankle being now greatly better, though not well, he walked out to watch their proceedings; and, sitting beside them, and occasionally giving some slight assistance, he saw hour after hour of the fourth day since his arrival wear away, in performing what he had imagined would have been completed in half the time; till at length, while several small things still remained to be done, he beheld the purple mingling with the blue in the sky, and telling that the day star was going down to the dark pavilion of his rest. "Oh! Seged, Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia!" cried Beauchamp, as he returned into the cottage, "I will this night, at all events, resolve upon doing nothing at all to-morrow, in order to see whether fate will for once disappoint me the right way!"

The morrow, however, dawned bright and clear—the boat was at length ready and launched; and Beauchamp—shaved as usual with the smuggler's one universal razor, and covered with the best specimen of his check-shirts—gladly stepped into the yawl, and saw her pushed off from the land by the united efforts of father and son, both of whom accompanied him on his voyage.

The boat was clinker-built, somewhat broad over the beam, and in all respects the very reverse of a long, thin, shadowy thing that was lying high and dry a little further up the beach, looking both in form and colour just like the shell of a razor-fish.

Old Willy Small, however, shook his head at mention of that craft, saying, "No, no! The preventive had knocked up all that stuff." So that Beauchamp, well content to get off at all, was obliged to rest satisfied with the slow and sure means of progression which the yawl afforded, though, the wind being light and rather baffling, it appeared very plainly that they were not destined to reach their port much before nightfall.

To increase the tediousness of a day's voyage in an open boat, to a man who had the utmost abhorrence of every sort of water-carriage, the fine morning waxed more and more dim; and first a drizzle, and then a deluge, continued to pour

from the sky during the whole of the rest of the day. It was five o'clock before they reached the small town, whose white houses, ranged along with their large goggling windows directly opposite the sea, like a score or two of unsophisticated girls, with white frocks and large black eyes, ranged along the side of a country ball-room, afforded a most welcome sight to the eyes of the weary voyager.

The custom-house officers satisfied themselves with wonderful ease that there was nothing in the boat which they could count as lawful prey, though the appearance of their well-known acquaintance, Willy Small, excited many a shrewd suspicion; and they looked after Beauchamp, as he was borne off to the inn, with the same prying glance with which the merchants, in the Arabian Nights, might be supposed to have examined the pieces of beef brought up by the eagles from the valley of diamonds. At the inn the dripping traveller, who limped along, leaning on the shoulder of the old smuggler, was examined with scarcely less attention, as soon as it was ascertained that he had no baggage; but, somehow, there was—to use a most fearful periphrasis—an air of right to respect, and of the habit of being obeyed, which instantly commanded obedience and attention.

Old Billy Small was immediately rewarded and dismissed; and, with many thanks, he hustled rapidly away, like a hunted hippopotamus, to his own element again; perhaps purposing, as he passed by the quay, to have some short conversation, concerning various professional matters, with some of the sailors of a ship which was lying in the harbour, and about to sail for Cherbourg the next morning.

When he was alone, Beauchamp thanked God—not with the empty idleness of tongue with which those words are so often spoken, but truly, sincerely, and from his heart—for his escape from dangers which he had not suffered himself to estimate fully till they were over. He then rang, and desired the landlord to be called, feeling heated and weary, and having taken it into his head that the long period which had elapsed since he had enjoyed anything like gentlemanly neatness of person was the cause of the dry and thirsty feeling that he experienced.

The landlord appeared, and answered his inquiries concerning warm baths, and various other matters which would occupy too much room to enumerate, eyeing him curiously to the end, when he added—"Beg pardon, sir—beg pardon! but is not your name Major Beauchamp?"

"It was some time ago," replied Mr. Beauchamp; "but I have quitted the service, and am now plain Mr. Beauchamp, if you please; but who are you, my good friend?"

"Beg your pardon, sir, for the liberty," replied the landlord; "but I am Frank, the waiter at ——'s Hotel, in St. James's street—that is to say, I was, sir; but this being my native place, and having got together a little money, and having married, and—you see, sir, I came to set up in a small way for myself."

"Well, I am glad to see you, Frank, and hope you may prosper," replied Beauchamp. "Have you many people in your house?"

"No, sir!" answered the man, with a somewhat grave shake of the head. "Not many; the season's over, indeed—only an old gentleman and his daughter, and an old lady who seems like the housekeeper; but they are very dismal-like, and do not do so much in the way of our business."

"They might be rueful enough, if they had been kept as I have been for the last five days," replied Beauchamp, "at a little cottage on the sea-shore, with a dislocated ankle, and neither clothes, assistance, nor the means of procuring any. But see about the things I mentioned, Frank, and send the things; and if these warm baths are not far, I will try to walk to them, in the meantime."

"Next door but one, sir!" replied the landlord. "Lord, sir, you walk very lame! Stay, sir, I will get my hat, and help you there!" and accordingly, leaning on the arm of the quondam waiter, Beauchamp made his way to the warm baths, feeling that there was some truth in the old Greek epigram, which describes them as amongst the luxuries without which life were not worth possessing.

Returning to the inn, where his family and fortune, by this time fully known, made the whole house ready to perform 'Cow Tow,' he dined with that sort of moderation which a man feels inclined to practise, when he finds himself extremely feverish, and when every sort of wine, from cool claret to hot sherry, seems like molten lead, within ten minutes after it is swallowed. Immediately after dinner, all the necessary changes of raiment, which he had been so long without, and which could never be so rapidly supplied as at a sea-port town, were brought in one by one, by the officious care of the landlord; and, on discovering that the first coach for London set off on the following morning at ten o'clock, he made that fact a good excuse to himself for yielding to the lassitude he felt, and going to bed at nine.

The night passed in heated tossing to and fro; and short fitful intervals of sleep, too dreamful and agitated to be called repose. From one of those brief snatches of slumber he was awakened early the next morning, by some one knocking at

the door of the room next to his own, and exclaiming in a loud tone, "Seven o'clock, sir; is the luggage ready?"

Beauchamp certainly wished the luggage, and the man who demanded it, at the bottom of the sea together, and tried to go to sleep again; but after rolling from side to side for half an hour, he found that it was in vain. All the infamous noises which announce that some frightful people, in the neighbouring chambers of the same inn, are going to set out upon voyage or journey, at an awfully early hour, were complicated around Beauchamp's unfortunate head; and at length, after the trampling of sailors and porters in the passage had ceased, he heard some one again knock at a door, on the opposite side of the passage, and say, "My love, I must go down to see the luggage passed and put on board; but make haste and be ready, for the ship will sail directly. I will send up and let you know when to come down."

Beauchamp started out of bed, and hurried on his clothes as fast as possible, for the voice was that of Sir Sidney Delaware; but his lameness still retarded him, and every time he took a quick step, his ankle gave way beneath him, and caused him intolerable pain; so that, just as he was tying his cravat, the voice of old Mrs. Williams, the housekeeper, was heard along the passage.

"Miss Blanche! Miss Blanche!" she cried, "make haste, pray make haste! Your papa says all is ready, and the ship is just going to sail."

Beauchamp pulled on his coat as best he might, and threw open his door; nor was he a moment too soon, for Blanche Delaware was already walking along the passage. She was paler far, but as beautiful as ever, and not the less so that the tears were swimming in her eyes at the thought of quitting her own dear fair native land—perhaps for ever.

"Good God, Miss Delaware!" cried Beauchamp, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Mr. Burrel!" exclaimed Blanche faintly, while the blood mounted quick into her cheek, and then again left it pale as ashes. "Oh, Mr. Burrel, where have you been? Your presence might perhaps have saved us all!"

"How?" cried Beauchamp. "You sent me from you, yourself. Had it not been for your own word, I would never, never have left you!"

"Do not—do not say it!" cried Blanche, while the tears streamed over her cheeks; "do not say it, or I shall never forgive myself—I never have, indeed. You only could have saved us—and oh, Henry Beauchamp, I am sure you would have done so!"

Beauchamp started to hear his real name from his fair cousin's lips; but Blanche went on rapidly and eagerly. "But it seems all strange to you. Have you not heard of my poor brother? Have you not heard what has happened?"

"I have heard nothing!" replied Beauchamp. "I have been detained for several days, ill and wretched, in a spot where I heard nothing."

"Oh!" cried Blanche, wringing her hands, "they have accused him of crimes he never committed, and blasted his name, and broken his heart—and if—if—Henry Beauchamp!——"

"Is not the lady coming?" cried a voice from below. "The ship's getting under weigh, ma'am. You'll be left behind, if you don't mind."

"Indeed, Miss Blanche, you must come," cried Mrs. Williams, who had hitherto discreetly remained at the other end of the corridor, when she saw who it was detained her young mistress. "You must come, indeed!"

"I will!" said Blanche, and, dropping her voice, she added —while for one moment she raised her beautiful eyes to Beauchamp's face, and the warm blood mounted again into her cheek—"Henry Beauchamp, my dear cousin, it is most likely the last time we shall ever meet—but if ever you loved me—if you would have poor Blanche Delaware bless and pray for you to her last hour—use your whole strength and mind to clear my poor brother's name and character. God bless you. God bless you!"—and she ran on, down the stairs.

Beauchamp paused for a moment in utter bewilderment, then, darting into his room, seized his hat, and followed with all the speed he could employ. That, however, was but little. The harbour was not far, it is true; but ere he could reach the narrow pier, from which the passengers had been embarked, the ship bound to Cherbourg had shot out to sea, and, with a strong and favourable wind, was making its way towards the coast of France.

Beauchamp gazed after her in vain; for nothing but the faint indistinct forms of the many people that crowded the deck could now be discovered; and, with feelings as bitter and painful as ever man felt, he turned away and went back to the inn.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On entering the sitting-room, which had been appropriated to him, Beauchamp cast himself back in a chair, and, for a moment, reflected on the extraordinary interview he had just

gone through. But a new discomfort now assailed him, and he felt a degree of confusion of thought, and even indistinctness of memory, that pained and alarmed him. Could the blow he had received on the head, he asked himself, the consequences of which he had entirely neglected—could it have injured his brain? Nevertheless, his personal feelings occupied him but for an instant, and were only permitted to cut across his thoughts of Blanche Delaware, and interrupt the ideas which his conversation with her had called up, when the dizzy mistiness of his brain prevented him from pursuing clearly any defined train of thinking.

Should he engage a boat, he asked himself, and follow Sir Sidney to Cherbourg, in search of further explanations — perhaps, I might say, in search of further hopes; for with all the confused and painful feelings that his brief interview with Blanche Delaware had excited, there had also been left behind a sweet consoling hope, that after all he was beloved, and that time might yet make her his own.

He paused upon that idea, which, like a gleam of sunshine upon the dark and struggling waters of the sea, gave one bright spot for the mind's eye to rest upon, in the midst of the doubts and anxieties that whirled around him. Should he follow her, he thought, and inquire what was meant by her allusion to her brother; or should he stay and do what he conceived to be his duty, in bringing to justice, as far as he could effect it, the men who had committed the crime at Ryebury. "I will see what has been already discovered," he said at length, "and then act as I find necessary."

In consequence of this resolution, he rang the bell, and demanded the newspapers of the last two or three days; but for some minutes after they were brought, he could scarcely read the matter they contained, so fearfully did the letters dance before his sight when he attempted to fix his eyes upon the page. He succeeded at length in gathering the contents; and it may be unnecessary to say, that, when he did so, he found sufficient at once to determine his conduct. The whole account of what had taken place at Emberton was now before him; and, with feelings that it is impossible to describe, he perceived that the very means he had taken to remove the difficulties of Sir Sidney Delaware and his family had, on the contrary, accumulated upon them a load of evils and distresses which his utmost apprehensions could never have anticipated.

Summoning the waiter once more, he ordered breakfast, and a place to be secured for him in the London coach. All was done according to his desire, with prompt activity; and, by a quarter after ten, Henry Beauchamp was on his way to

London, in the inside of a hot stage-coach, crammed full of humanity; while his own feelings consisted of a compound of intense mental anxiety, and all those horrible corporeal sensations which precede a violent attack of fever. His hands and his head burned like living coals; his feet were as cold as ice; and a faint sort of chilly shiverings thrilled over all his frame, alternating with a degree of heat that became sometimes intolerable.

He endured all this with firm determination for six mortal hours; but at length he found that nature would bear no more, and that he must stop. At Hartford Bridge, then, where his name and station in society were well known, from his having often spent a night in that most pleasant of all country inns—the White Lion—he desired the coachman to put him down, and entered the house. His appearance was so altered, that the old waiter did not recognise him for a moment; but the moment that he did so, he declared, upon his word then, that Major Beauchamp must be ill, in which assertion Beauchamp found strong reason within his own bosom to coincide.

The result, therefore, was, that, before the sixth day after he had been carried from Emberton was completely over, Henry Beauchamp was in bed, with an apothecary gently compressing his wrist on one side, and a waiter holding the candle on the other. After innumerable questions, to all of which the young gentleman answered like a lamb—which showed how ill he was—the apothecary declared him in a state of fever, and bled him considerably. By this depletion he certainly felt relieved for the time, and the next morning was not at all worse than he had been the day before. Nevertheless, he was troubled with no inclination to rise; and the landlord asked anxiously of the man of medicine whether he conceived his patient to be in any danger, as he was aware that the gentleman had relations of high rank in London, whom he might wish to write to, if he knew himself in precarious circumstances.

Such a question, though so frequently put, remains still one of tremendous difficulty to the professors of the healing art, inasmuch as, on the one hand, they never can like, by acknowledging that there is great danger, to run the risk of other advice being called in, and yet they neither choose to lose the credit which may accrue from curing a bad case, nor to incur the blame that will attach to them if their patient dies without their having admitted his peril. However, as vanity and covetousness are, generally speaking, stronger passions than apprehension, the followers of Esculapius usually seem to prefer running all risks, rather than have their cases inter-

fered with by another practitioner. In the present instance, it occurred that the apothecary was really in the right when he informed the worthy landlord that, although his guest had certainly a sharp fever upon him, yet he did not see any present danger.

Thus passed over the day. No one was written to; and, before night, Beauchamp was not in a state to write to any one himself, having become completely delirious. The apothecary grew a little frightened; but as the landlord did not know the precise address of Beauchamp's friends, and as the patient could not give it himself, there was no remedy but patience and perseverance.

The delirium continued, with but little interval, for two days; but as the medical man was really a person of skill, his patient's constitution excellent, and the fever not very malignant in its nature, favourable symptoms began to show themselves sooner than could have been expected, and, at the end of five days more, the young gentleman was pronounced convalescent.

Though for some time he felt himself very weak, and incapable of much mental exertion, yet, from the moment the delirium left him, Henry Beauchamp found his thoughts much clearer and more exact than they had been since the day of his leaving Emberton; and, as he considered the various events which had taken place, a number of circumstances which the reader's mind may easily recall, without minute recapitulation, led him to suspect that his uncle's lawyer, if not his uncle himself, had increased, if not created, many of those difficulties which, combined with accidental occurrences, had overwhelmed Sir Sidney Delaware and his family in ruin and in sorrow.

He was unwilling, indeed, to admit to his own mind that Lord Ashborough would descend to anything mean or dishonourable, even to effect the very honourable purpose of revenge, which, when formalised by the rules of the monomachia, justifies murder; and, therefore, may surely equally well justify robbery, or fraud, or petty larceny, or any other peccadillo. But, at the same time, Beauchamp could not shut out the conviction that the ruin of Sir Sidney Delaware and his family, by whatever means effected, would be in no degree disagreeable to the noble Earl. In fact, he had seen more deeply into his uncle's character and into his uncle's heart than Lord Ashborough knew; and though his discoveries were rendered less harsh by the natural affection of kindred, yet they had certainly not tended to increase that affection in any extraordinary degree.

However, all his reflections terminated in an uncertainty

as to the past conduct of his uncle and his uncle's lawyer, which made him resolve to investigate the whole matter further before he acted; for though he was unchangeably resolved that justice to William Delaware should be done, yet he was anxious, of course, that it should be rendered with as little obloquy to his own relation as possible. "Thank God, he has made his escape!" he thought; "and the Earl, too, must have left London soon after I quitted it myself, so that he cannot be at all acquainted with my share in this unfortunate business at Ryebury. I will therefore remain quietly where I am till I can proceed to London, and then investigate every circumstance before I fix upon any further plans. Of course I shall easily discover the residence of Sir Sidney Delaware in France; and, when I have cleared his son's fair fame, may meet them all with better hopes and brighter prospects."

Such were some of the reflections and resolutions of Henry Beauchamp, as he was recovering from the fever which had detained him at Hartford Bridge; and though he certainly indulged in a great many other reflections, and formed a great many more resolutions, yet they were all conceived in the same strain, and tended to the same effect. As day by day, however, he began to acquire strength, and saw that, at the end of two or three more whirls of the great humming-top, he would be able to set out for London, a new difficulty pressed upon him of somewhat a novel nature. He had an inn bill to pay, which could not be small—he had an apothecary's bill to pay, which must be still larger, and sick-nurses, &c., came at the end to swell the amount. Ten sovereigns were all that remained in his purse; and had Beauchamp been aware that, in the opinion of all his friends and relations, he was actually dead and buried under water, if not under ground, he might have been still more puzzled how to proceed than he was in his state of blessed ignorance regarding all these facts.

His resource, in the present instance, was to indite a letter to his worthy friend and agent, Mr. Wilkinson, informing him, in a few words, that he had been ill at Hartford Bridge, and would thank him to send down, either by post or coach, a sufficient sum to pay his temporary expenses.

This epistle reached Mr. Wilkinson just as he was drawing up a general statement of the money matters of the late Henry Beauchamp, Esq., formerly of his Majesty's —— regiment of dragoons; and the letter of the living Mr. Beauchamp, of course, put a sudden stop to the affairs of the dead one. The handwriting, however, although certainly bearing a great resemblance to that of his client, was, as Mr. Wilkinson ob-

served, more like a copy of his hand than his hand itself; and the illness which had produced this difference, had also produced a brevity and carelessness of style, in which Henry Beauchamp was not accustomed to indulge. The consequence of all this was, that Mr. Wilkinson, calculating that Hartford Bridge was only thirty miles from London, and that two or three guineas was better lost than two or three hundreds, put himself at once into the coach which was to have conveyed the money; and in a few hours he was sitting beside the identical Henry Beauchamp, who had left London about two months before, and was assisting him most conscientiously to dispatch the first meat meal he had been allowed to taste since his recovery.

As may well be supposed, this interview was destined to enlighten Beauchamp greatly as to many events which had taken place; and, after having laughed at his own death more heartily than a merrier matter might have occasioned, the invalid entered into explanations with his lawyer, which in turn gave him a new but sad insight into the occurrences of the last three weeks.

"I am afraid, sir," said Mr. Wilkinson, "there has been very foul play! This Mr. Tims, who bears so bad a character in the profession, that it is a very general wonder how your noble relative continues to employ him—has, since your death —God bless me!—I mean, since your supposed decease—has, I say, presented the very note for ten thousand pounds (which you say you gave to the murdered man at Ryebury) as payment of the sum owed to your account by his client, your uncle; and yet, though this, and the vouchers which he must have found concerning the fifteen thousand pounds sent before, cannot have failed to show him that the money tendered by Captain Delaware was advanced by you, yet he is, I understand, pursuing the business against that unfortunate young gentleman with greater virulence than ever. I heard only yesterday that his name had been struck out of the Navy List."

"God forbid!" cried Beauchamp! "But does the rascal keep both the twenty-five thousand pounds paid, and the ten thousand which my uncle should have transferred to my account?"

"Not only that," answered the lawyer, "but contending that, as the money had been stolen, it did not constitute a legal discharge of Lord Ashborough's claim upon Sir Sidney Delaware, he has plunged the whole business into Chancery —has, at the same time, started a point which can only be decided by a common law court; and as he has all the most obsolete and vexatious decisions at his finger's ends, would

undoubtedly have kept the business embroiled for years, had you not suddenly started up to prove that the payment was legal, and therefore the whole difficulty at an end."

"And if I had not started up," said Beauchamp, "and William Delaware had been taken, I suppose one of the most gallant officers in his Majesty's service, and one of the most generous-spirited gentlemen in England, would have been hanged for a crime he never committed."

"Why, I am sorry to say, that it is very probable he might have been so dealt with," answered Mr. Wilkinson.

"Then, immortal honour to Robert Peel!" said Beauchamp, "for having begun a reformation in laws, which, though far superior to those of any other nation in the world, are yet so imperfect as to risk such a loud-tongued iniquity; and may he have life and power granted to him to correct all their evils without diminishing their efficiency. But you speak, my dear sir, of my starting up. Now, do you know, I have a great mind not to start up for some time yet; and to give this rogue, Tims, time enough to show himself in his true colours. As I am dead, and the mourning bought, and all those whose hearts would break upon my account are broken-hearted already, I do not see why I should announce my resuscitation in the newspapers till I have obtained not only the proofs—which, indeed, I can furnish myself—of William Delaware's complete innocence, but the proofs also of the guilt of those who really did commit the murder; and which, with a little of your good advice, I doubt not easily to acquire. In the meantime, if I am not mistaken, good Mr. Tims, counting upon my death, will plunge deeper and deeper into the quagmire of deceit and villany through which he is now struggling, and we shall have an opportunity of at once exposing him, and opening my uncle's eyes to his knavery."

Mr. Wilkinson shook his head with a dry "hum!" at the last sentence which Beauchamp spoke; but the other part of his young client's proposal he approved very much, saying, "The plan is a good one; and we must never show our adversary our cards, as Mr. Pleydel is made to observe, by the only great romance-writer that the world has produced since Cervantes, and Le Sage, and Fielding. But you forget, Mr. Beauchamp, that I do not fully know what information you possess. Your lawyer must be your confessor, if you would have his advice of any avail."

Beauchamp in reply recounted all that had happened to him since he left Emberton on the morning before the murder—the fact of his servant Harding overtaking him at Dr. Wilton's rectory—his own return to Ryebury—his first and

second visit to the miser—his compulsory voyage wit the murderers—and his stay at the house of the smuggler—all, in short, that had occurred, with the exception of a brief interview in the corridor of the inn at ——, which he thought proper to leave untold.

Mr. Wilkinson rubbed his hands at each pause, and in the end declared that nothing was more plain than the facts, and nothing would be more easy than the proof. The man Harding, he said, whom you think you recognised in the boat with this Walter Harrison, has never returned to your house in London; and therefore we may conclude from the fact of the powder-flask, and from your recognition, that he it really was who committed the murder, with the other two, and the maid-servant, as accessories. Information must be obtained from this man Small, in regard to the port at which his cutter landed them in France; and once having gained that, we have nothing to do but to set a Bow Street officer on the track, and he will follow it like a bloodhound. I entertain as strange doubts in regard to this Mr. Peter Tims as you do; and believe, from some memoranda on the back of your note of hand, that he knows fully, at this moment, that Captain Delaware never had anything to do with the murder of his uncle. Such a man well deserves to be punished; and if you like to lie incog. for a week or so, we will watch his proceedings; but you must not take it ill, my dear sir, if I say, that we must be careful not to implicate any one whom we might not like to inculpate."

Beauchamp's cheek flushed a good deal, but he replied calmly, "I understand you, Mr. Wilkinson; but I am sure there is no fear of that. However, my own intention is to go at once to France—I shall certainly endeavour to see my sister first; for if any one on earth grieves for me indeed, it is poor Maria. But, as I said, I shall certainly go to France, and may help in tracing these villains myself."

"But," said Mr. Wilkinson, "you must pause a few days. I will write to the local magistrates, and gain a clear view of all they have discovered in the neighbourhood. We must have this man Small examined; and I do not well see how we can proceed without your presence in England; suppose, for instance, Captain Delaware should be taken and brought to trial?"

"Why, of course, I will stay a few days," replied Beauchamp, musing; "and, before I go, I will make a formal deposition on oath before a magistrate, which, I suppose, I must do, in order to induce him to grant me an officer to seek the culprits in France."

"There is an officer in Paris already, I believe," replied

Mr. Wilkinson, "but, at all events, we must get full information ere we proceed. Believe me, the man that meddles with law, either criminal or civil, without obtaining a clear knowledge of every circumstance before he takes a single step, is very likely, indeed, to burn his fingers."

"It is a dangerous thing to touch, I know full well," replied Beauchamp, with a smile; "and God forbid that I should have more to do with it than necessary. I will therefore come to London, where I suppose that there is not a mortal being left by this time but you gentlemen of the law, and I may very well pass my time incog. at an hotel."

"Nay, indeed, you are mistaken as to the paucity of better people than lawyers in London," replied Mr. Wilkinson. "Your noble uncle is himself in town, and your sister. The latter I have had the honour of seeing, and found her equally in despair about yourself and Captain Delaware."

"Indeed!" said Beauchamp, smiling at a small twinkling of fun that danced for a moment in Mr. Wilkinson's eyes as he mentioned Miss Beauchamp's anxiety in regard to William Delaware. "Indeed! and does Maria show herself so greatly distressed about this accusation against her cousin?"

"So much so," replied Mr. Wilkinson, "that she would insist upon employing me in gathering evidence for his defence, which, by the way, is the cause of my knowing so much about the case. Not only that, but understanding apparently that there is no such stimulus to a lawyer's exertions as money, she made me take notes for two hundred pounds to meet the expenses."

"She is very generous, indeed," answered Beauchamp; "but pray, did she show any inclination to ascertain my existence?"

"Oh yes, most eagerly!" replied Mr. Wilkinson. "Come come, my dear sir, you must not think that interest in the cousin made her forget the brother. On the contrary, although she says that she knows you too well to believe that you would drown yourself—yet——"

"What! did they make it out that I had drowned myself?" cried Beauchamp. "You did not tell me that before, Mr. Wilkinson!"

"Why, I thought it might hurt your feelings, and only said it now incautiously," replied the lawyer; "but so indeed it is. They made it out that you had drowned yourself in the sea, near Emberton."

"They made a very great mistake, then," said Beauchamp, biting his lip. "You need not tell me the causes assigned for the 'rash act,' as the newspapers term such things.

I can divine them all, as it suited each person to put them. The ladies, of course, said it was for love, and the men said debt or gambling. No, no, I shall never commit suicide. I laughed so heartily once at a philosopher at Geneva, who determined to commit suicide in a fit of the spleen, that I am sure I could not do it, even if I felt inclined. He went down to drown himself in the lake, and, as it was a rainy day, he carefully took his umbrella. When he came to the side of the water, however, and began to put down the umbrella, the absurdity of the whole affair of a man drowning himself with an umbrella in his hand suddenly tickled his fancy to such a degree, that he burst into a fit of laughter, and turned upon his heel. Meeting him with the tears in his eyes, I soon joined in his merriment when I heard the story; and the very idea of suicide is connected with such ludicrous ideas, in my mind, that it makes me laugh even to think of it—but you were saying that my uncle was in town; how does he console himself for my irreparable loss?"

"I have not seen Lord Ashborough," observed Mr. Wilkinson; "but every one agrees that he has felt your supposed death more bitterly than any event that ever occurred to him through life. Miss Beauchamp will never give credit to the story of your death; but he, I understand, believes it firmly, and of course, I need not tell you, that he is surrounded already by hundreds of sycophants, eager to share in the immense wealth which is now, as they believe, without a direct heir. Under such circumstances, would it not be better to give his lordship intimation of your existence, as he may perhaps alter his will—and life is precarious?"

"Not I!" answered Beauchamp. "The hereditary estates go with the title, and I shall take no step whatever to secure anything else. In fact, I believe that I have contradicted my uncle more frequently than my sense of respect would have otherwise permitted me to do, simply because he has two or three hundred thousand pounds to leave, and I do not choose to be thought a sycophant. I should have been a very dutiful nephew, indeed, if it had not been for that money; the more especially, as I know that my good uncle values it so highly himself, that he cannot help thinking I must value it highly too."

"At all events," said Mr. Wilkinson, who saw that his client was becoming rather fatigued, and perhaps the more unmanageable from that circumstance,—"at all events, Mr. Beauchamp, before you set out once more, like the Knight of La Mancha, upon a new sally in search of such perilous adventures, you must give me fuller powers to act for you,

and fuller instructions, too, as to how I am to act; for good Mr. Tims has already been hinting at winding up the affairs of the late Henry Beauchamp, Esquire, as he phrases it."

"Indeed!" said Beauchamp. "Well, I do believe that if there were an act for hanging rogues, it would ultimately save a vast waste of hemp upon thieves, and leave honester men in the world after all. But I must now let you seek repose; and we will talk more of these matters to-morrow morning, when, if my Galen will suffer me, I will accompany you to London. For the last ten days I have been like poor Erminia:—

'Cibo non prende già che de suoi mali
Solo si pasce, e sol di pianto ha sete?"

But I think I have made amends for one evening at least."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Mr. Wilkinson, though a very pleasant, gentlemanly man—slightly inclined to be facetious, but never yielding to that vein further than a subdued—one might almost say, internal—smile, at the odd things, and the absurd things, and the wicked things of this world—was quite in the wrong in taking it into his head that Maria Beauchamp was in love with Captain William Delaware. In truth, she was not; though certainly never were there circumstances more likely to make her become so. She had only got as far at present as being interested in the young sailor's fate in the highest degree; perfectly convinced that he was innocent and injured—thinking him certainly a very handsome youth—and granting that he was, with all his simplicity, one of the most agreeable men she had ever seen. The reader may ask if all this, then, was not love? No, no, no! It was not. There were bricks, and mortar, and trowels, and hods; but it was not the tower of Babel—what I mean is, that there were all the materials for love, but they wanted putting together.

In Lord Ashborough's house, however, with all these prepossessions in William Delaware's favour, she heard nothing coupled with his name but pompous censure, or flat and pointless sneers, and she dared not say a word in his favour. Now, this, as it furnished her with a motive for not only thinking of him from morning till night, but furnished her also with a legitimate cause for connecting, in the sweet, unanswered privacy of her own bosom, all those manifold arguments in his favour which she could have put forth in society, had she

been afraid of their being controverted, caused imagination, and zeal, and generous enthusiasm, to labour hard to build up the said bricks and mortar into the firm and regular structure which Mr. Wilkinson, in his over-hasty conclusions, imagined to be already built.

However all that may be, it is certain that few people had been more completely wretched than Maria Beauchamp since the business at Ryebury had taken place, and she yielded to a degree of gloom and despondency which Lord Ashborough had never before seen her display under any circumstances. As she never mingled in the conversation regarding William Delaware, the Earl imagined that anxiety and suspense in regard to the fate of her brother, were the causes of her gloom; and—with the very natural consideration which people generally display, who, however much grieved they may feel for a time, love to get over the memory of their dead relations as fast as may be—the noble Earl took every means of removing her state of doubt as fast as possible, by assuring her, on all occasions, that unquestionably her brother was dead.

Suddenly a change came over Miss Beauchamp's whole demeanour. Though she admitted that it was very possible her brother might be dead, yet she resumed her usual tone of spirits; and instead of being silent in regard to Captain Delaware, she repelled with contempt the idea of his guilt whenever it was mentioned, declaring that she felt as much confidence in his innocence of the murder as she did in her own. All this surprised Lord Ashborough. The first, indeed, he accounted for pleasantly enough to himself, declaring that Maria's mind had now recovered its elasticity, having been relieved from suspense by the firm conviction which he had taken care to impress upon it that her brother was dead. He lauded at the same time, be it remarked, his own wisdom in the course he had pursued, blaming severely those ill-judging friends who, in such cases, suffer hope to linger on till it wears itself out.

In regard to Miss Beauchamp's extraordinary perversity in defending the murderer, he declared that he was more puzzled; and one day, after having remonstrated severely, he related the fact to the worthy Mr. Peter Tims. That excellent person, however, only decided that it was a lady's caprice; and with this solution of the enigma his lordship was forced to rest satisfied.

In the meanwhile, Henry Beauchamp did the most uninteresting thing in the whole world—namely, he travelled from Calais to Paris; for, with the exception of Sterne, who carried his own world about with him in his post-chaise—and

a strange mixed world of beauty and deformity it was—I know no one who has been able to make anything of the journey between those two towns, either one way or the other—except, indeed, the Duke of Guise, in 1558, who made Calais a French town of it.

Henry Beauchamp's journey was somewhat Quixotic, certainly; but the whole details of his sally serve lamentably to show how the science of knight-errantry has declined since the occultation of the star of La Mancha. For a squire he had a Bow Street officer, backed by letters missive from the Foreign Secretary, and seated upon the rumble of a dark-green armless chariot, beside a fierce-looking mastiff of a courier, whom Beauchamp had engaged upon somewhat surer grounds than those on which Master Harding had been received into his service. Dapple and Rozinante were converted into four French stallions, of all sorts and sizes and instead of mistaking inns for castles, one might have concluded that the young Englishman mistook them for prisons, so strenuously did he avoid them by travelling night and day.

As Mr. Wilkinson had stated, an officer had been previously sent to Paris in pursuit of Captain Delaware: and although it had not been judged expedient, notwithstanding the information given by Mr. Beauchamp, to recall him from that search, yet he was directed vigorously to co-operate with the person now sent to arrest Harding and his accomplices. Beauchamp, in his inexperience of such matters, had thought it might be better to follow the culprits by the port at which they had landed in France, and which had been clearly ascertained from Willy Small, the smuggler, and his eldest son, who had acted as master of the cutter that took them over. The officer shook the wise head, however, and said, "No, no! Let us go to Paris first, sir; for that's a place which is sure to draw all rogues to it, first or last—as a saucer of honey in a shop window catches the flies. We get at all the passports there, too; and, besides, the mayors and folks in the country places wouldn't dare to back us in seizing the men without a government order, and a 'John Darm,' as they call them. When we have searched Paris, let us set off for Cherbourg, and meet them in the face."

To this reasoning Beauchamp of course yielded; and although some difficulties occurred on the part of the French government, they were speedily removed—the passport-office was examined—some of the most active agents of the French police were employed—and such information finally obtained as the Bow Street officer thought likely to lead to the discovery of the whole party, either at Cherbourg or

at Caen. Thither, then, Beauchamp and his attendants of various kinds, now increased in number to four, turned their steps, making the most minute inquiries at every point which offered the least chance of affording information concerning the culprits. Beauchamp, at the same time, pursued another search, anticipating, with no small eagerness, a meeting with Miss Delaware and her father, who, he concluded, must journey by slow stages, on account of the baronet's health. Strange, however, to say, that he, and the Bow Street officer, and the French agent of police, were all equally disappointed. Beauchamp found nobody that he sought; and his companions, though they laid hands upon the three personages whose passports and description had excited suspicion, were surprised and mortified to find that they bore not the slightest resemblance to those who had carried Mr. Beauchamp off from Ryebury.

On minute inquiry amongst the fishermen of the village where the culprits were said to have landed, the house was at length discovered in which they had first lodged; and the aubergiste at once declared, that, understanding the English language, he had heard them announce their intention of proceeding to Havre, in order to embark on board some American trader.

No time was to be lost under such circumstances, as ships were sailing every day for some transatlantic port or another; and the horses having been again put to the two carriages which now formed the cortège, away went Beauchamp and his train for Havre. From Cherbourg to Havre, running through one halt of the peninsula of Cotentin, is a long, though not uninteresting journey, to one who has nothing else to think of. But Beauchamp was in haste to get on. French postilions are slow, and Norman postilions notoriously slower. The steam-boat was gone when the party arrived at Honfleur; and, in short, everything that nature and art could do to stop them on their way was done to perfection. At length when they did reach Havre, they found that one vessel had sailed for America the preceding day, full of emigrants of all descriptions, and that two others had departed about four days earlier, each of which, to believe the accounts given of them, must have been a perfect Noah's Ark.

Beauchamp and the officers lost heart, and even the courier, whose trade being to run, began to look rueful, under the apprehension that, if no further clue could be gained, his occupation would soon be gone. After every inn had been inspected, every consul consulted, every shipping-office examined, Beauchamp determined once more to return to Paris,

and thither he accordingly came by the way of Rouen, followed by the posse, who found it not at all disagreeable to eat, and drink, and sleep at his expense, and be paid for the trouble thereof over and above.

New researches were immediately commenced; and never did fat-faced Gibbon bend his rotund cheeks over the pages of infidelity, ancient or modern, from Arius to Hobbes, with more eagerness to filch or find an objection or a fault in the blessed faith, whose beginning and end is glory to God in the highest, and peace and good-will towards men, than did all parties pursue their object of discovering the guilty, in order, principally, it must be confessed, to exculpate the innocent. But the search seemed perfectly in vain; and the only conclusion to which any one could come was, that the murderers had really effected their escape to America. After nibbling at various surmises and reports for some time, the officer who had accompanied Beauchamp declared himself foiled, and took his leave. He who had been sent in quest of Captain Delaware had abandoned the pursuit for some time; and Beauchamp was thus left alone to proceed with such inquiries as he might still have sufficient perseverance to make.

These inquiries, it must be confessed, related principally to Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware: but here as many difficulties awaited him as he had met with in the other search; and he was just on the point of giving up the matter in despair, and returning to London to surprise his mourning friends, when a circumstance occurred, which, without throwing the slightest ray of light upon the course which Blanche and her father had taken, served, at all events, to induce Beauchamp to remain in Paris for several days longer than he had intended.

The hotel in which he lodged, at the corner of the Rue de la Paix, unlike most hotels in Paris, had but one staircase; and Beauchamp, who walked up and down this staircase as seldom as possible, had rarely the misfortune of meeting many people upon it. The last day but one, however, of his intended stay, he encountered a lady walking leisurely up; and as each moved a little on one side to suffer the other to pass, by a sort of semi-rotation of each upon the axis, their faces came opposite to one another, and Beauchamp recognised Mrs. Darlington, while she paid him the same compliment.

"Good gracious, Mr. Burrel!" she exclaimed, much more surprised than was at all proper—"or Mr. Beauchamp, am I to call you? for people tell me that the Mr. Burrel I had the pleasure of knowing, was known to others under the name of

Beauchamp. But under whatever name you choose, I am most happy to see you; for all your good friends in England told me you were dead."

"They have done me too much honour in every respect, my dear madam," replied Beauchamp. "Those the gods love, you know, die young. But though I must plead guilty to having deceived you, by calling myself names far different from my own, yet believe me, when I assure you that I had no hand in my own death. That was entirely arranged by my friends and relations—though I doubt not, when I go back to England, the public prosecutor will think fit to arraign me for felo-de-se, with as much justice as the coroner's jury returned a verdict of murder against poor William Delaware."

"Ah, that was a terrible business!" replied Mrs. Darlington. "A terrible business, indeed, poor young man! and I should like to talk it over with you, Mr. Beauchamp: but I dare say that was your carriage waiting, and I will not keep you now; but if you will return at half-past six, and dine with me and the Abbé de——, who is as deaf as a pug-dog, I will tell you a curious circumstance which has occurred to me since I came here—not about the Delawares, indeed, poor people, but about something that happened just at the same time."

Everything that happened at that time was more or less a matter of interest to Henry Beauchamp; and therefore he willingly agreed to dine and hear, according to invitation. A few minutes after the appointed time, he was in the saloon of Madame Darlington's apartments, where he found that lady, with a worthy ex-emigré Abbé—the very sort of man who could dine with a widow lady of any age without scandal.

Beauchamp fully understood the 'bienseance' of never being curious about anything, and therefore he listened to all Mrs. Darlington's reasons for being in Paris—how London was of course out of the question in October—how the house she had hired near Emberton had turned out as damp as a fen, and smelt of a wet dog from the garret to the kitchen—how Paris always afforded variety, &c.—without showing the slightest inclination to inquire into the occurrence she had mentioned in the morning. Dinner was announced, and was as recherché in France as if it had been at Emberton; but not a word took place concerning the occurrence, Mrs. Darlington spending all the leisure moments in marvelling that Mr. Beauchamp and herself could have remained in the same house for four days without discovering their proximity. After dinner, Beauchamp's 'bienseance' began to get tired, and probably would have broken down entirely, had he not fortu-

nately happened to take up a very beautiful eyeglass set with emeralds, in the French fashion, which lay upon the table in the saloon.

"Oh, dear, that puts me in mind, Mr. Beauchamp!" cried Mrs. Darlington. "It is strange enough; I have twice bought that eyeglass in this very town. Once two days, and once eighteen months, ago. That is the very thing I wished to tell you about. You remember when you did me the favour of dining with me at Emberton; my house was burned down——"

"Var shocken, indeed!" cried the Abbé, who piqued himself on speaking English. "Terrible shocken great!"

"Well," continued Mrs. Darlington, "that very evening, I left that eyeglass upon the table in the drawing-room; and you remember, I dare say, that I lost all my plate and jewels—indeed, the loss of various things was incalculable—but, however, that glass was amongst the rest; and as it was a sort of pet, I went into a shop the other day to see if I could find anything like it. Well, the jeweller finding out I was English—though how he did so, I am sure I do not know, for I believe I speak French tolerably——"

"Oh, var excellent much!" said the Abbé, who was listening with his most acute ear bent subserviently to Mrs. Darlington's story. "As one Frenchwoman."

Mrs. Darlington smiled, nodded, and went on. "Well, the man found out that I was an Englishwoman—by the carriage, I suppose; and would talk nothing but English all the time, though he spoke it badly enough. On my describing what I wanted, he said that he had got the very thing; fresh arrived from England three days before. I told him that what I wanted was French; he declared that I must be mistaken, and produced my own eyeglass, with I. D., Isabella Darlington," ("What pretty name!" cried the Abbé) "on the medallion. I bought it, as you see, and the jeweller assured me that he had purchased it three days before from an English gentleman with black hair and large whiskers."

"Although the description is very exact," answered Beauchamp, smiling, "I can assure you, my dear madam, that I was not the thief—but as it has long struck me that there has been something very mysterious indeed in the whole business of the fire at your house, I should like much to know the name of the jeweller; and if you will favour me with it, will delay my departure for a day or two, in order to make further inquiries."

Mrs. Darlington thanked Beauchamp warmly for the interest he took in the matter; and the address being given and put down, the young Englishman declared he would go that

night and take the first steps towards investigating the business fully. Accordingly taking his leave, he sauntered out into the Place Vendôme, and thence into one of the principal streets in the neighbourhood of the Tuileries, where, entering the shop of the jeweller, he bought some trifling article, as a fair excuse for indulging in that sort of gossip which he thought most likely to elicit some facts.

The Frenchman was exactly the sort of person with whom one would desire to gossip. He was even more urbane than the editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, fond of a little conversation on any subject—love, war, or politics—with those who came to buy his nick-nacks, and had his small fund of wit, of sentiment, and of anecdotism—not more of either than would have lain conveniently in a vinaigrette, yet quite sufficient to give piquancy to his vivacious nothings. Beauchamp soon led him to the subject of Mrs. Darlington's eyeglass; but he quitted it in a moment, declaring that it was a droll occurrence, but nothing to what had happened since.

He always had Galignani's Messenger on his counter, he said, to amuse the English gentlemen who dealt with him; and the other night, as he was sitting alone, a 'beau jeune homme' who had been there once before, came in to offer him some other articles for sale. "While I was examining what the stranger brought," continued the jeweller, "the young Englishman took up the newspaper, and then suddenly laid it down, but after a moment or two, he took it up again; and then I saw that he had just lighted upon the horrible murder that has been lately committed in your country by a Captain in the Navy. Well, sir, when I looked in his face, he had turned as pale as a table-cloth, and was so agitated that I should have thought that he was the assassin himself, had he not been too young to be a Captain in your Navy. He read it out every word, however, though I could clearly see that he was very much disturbed, and I am sure that he was some relation either of the man who was killed, or of the murderer."

"How old was he?" demanded Beauchamp, remembering the extreme youthfulness of Captain Delaware's appearance.

"Oh, he could not be twenty!" answered the jeweller. "He was very fair, too, with fine light hair, tall, and well made too. Do you think it could be the assassin, Monsieur?"

"Certainly not!" replied Beauchamp; who, though morally convinced that it was Captain Delaware whom the jeweller had seen, was still more convinced that he had nothing to do with the murder. "The man who committed this crime is quite a different person; I know the gentleman who has been

here, as you describe, and I wish much to see him. Have you any idea of his address?"

"None whatever, sir!" replied the jeweller; "but I dare say he will be here again soon; for I bought the bijoux he had to sell, and he said that he had more, and would return."

"Well, it is of no great consequence," replied Beauchamp, assuming as much indifference as possible; "but in case he does come, be so good as to tell him that Mr. Henry Burrel is at the Hotel de ——, Rue de la Paix; and would be very glad to see him. Tell him also that I shall be at home and alone on every evening during the week, from the hour of seven till the hour of ten."

The jeweller promised to deliver the message punctually; and, to guard against all mistakes, Beauchamp put down in writing his assumed name, and the number of his apartments in the hotel. He then—to do full justice to Mrs. Darlington's business—tried to bring the jeweller back to the story of the eyeglass; but it was all in vain. The man was like one of those birds whose correct ornithological name I do not know, but which boys call water-wagtails, and which go hopping from stone to stone, pausing lightly balanced on each for a moment, and then springing on to another, without ever returning to the same. It was in vain Beauchamp tried to elicit any further information; he skipped on from subject to subject, and nothing further could be made of him.

Tired of the endeavour, the young Englishman at length rose and returned to his hotel, bidding the man send the trinkets he had bought. He there reported his ill success to Mrs. Darlington; and taking measures to guard against intrusion at the hour he had promised to be alone on the following nights, he waited anxiously for Captain Delaware's coming, with that degree of uncertainty—as to whether the young officer would ever revisit the jeweller, and whether he would come even if he did receive the message—which Beauchamp could not endure with that feeling, or rather assumption, of indifference with which he sometimes cheated himself.

From seven till ten on the two following nights, he paced his little saloon, with a degree of anxiety which he had hardly ever felt before. Every step upon the stairs caught his ear —every voice in the anteroom, where he had placed his own servant on guard, made him pause and listen; but it was all in vain; and on both nights he heard ten, and even eleven, strike before he abandoned the consolatory reflection that clocks might differ, and that the object of his expectation might still appear.

As he now felt certain, however, that William Delaware was in the same city with himself, he resolved to wait on in Paris; and, if the message he had left proved vain, to endeavour once more to discover his dwelling by other means.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Henry Beauchamp was, beyond all doubt, by nature an impatient man; but, for the first five-and-twenty years of his life, his impatience had found so little in his state or situation whereon to work, that it had gone lame for want of exercise. Nature—notwithstanding Locke—had given him a store of noble feelings, and education had added thereto a store of good principles; and, with all this to guard him against evil desires, he had found little in the world to wish for that his fortune or influence had not enabled him to obtain with ease: thus he was only now beginning to find matters whereon to exercise the virtue of patience.

On the third day after his visit to the jeweller's, Beauchamp began to find that his stock of patience was nearly exhausted, and likewise to contemplate paying another visit to the shop where he had first obtained this clue, as he hoped it would prove, for discovering the residence of William Delaware. Indeed, he would have pursued that course at once, had he not feared that his anxiety on the subject might excite suspicion, and cause some annoyance to the object of his search. This reflection, though it did not keep him from going near the jeweller's house more than once in the course of the day, did prevent him from venturing into it.

His equanimity, however, was gone; and, whether it arose from his late attack of fever, or from the air of Paris in the first days of November, or from disappointment and vexation, I cannot tell; but certain it is, he viewed everything on the darkest side, and began to revolve the prospect of losing Blanche Delaware for ever, just at the moment that he had found new hopes of having her heart in his favour.

The consolatory process of dining did nothing for him; and, as seven o'clock chimed on the third day, the whole array of dinner was removed, the courier stationed as before in the anteroom, with strict orders given to admit no one but the person described; and, as soon as he was admitted, to retire, and leave his master and the stranger alone. Eight o'clock came, Beauchamp ordered coffee, and took a book; but, though he gazed with an involuntary smile upon the

grotesque drawings stitched into the Roi de Boheme, no word could he read of the letter-press. He tried the eloquent nonsense of Chateaubriand, but it was as unpalatable as the satirical nonsense of Nodier; and, casting away the books, he gave the matter up in despair, abandoning himself to the contemplation of the pictures in the wood fire.

At length the door of the anteroom was heard to open, and the voice of some one speaking to the courier reached Beauchamp's ear; but the door shut again, the intruder descended the stairs, and all was silent once more. The moment after, however, the same sounds were repeated; the door of the saloon also was thrown wide open by the servant, who uttered, at the same time, the pleasant words of, "Here is the gentleman you expected, sir!"

Beauchamp started up as the visitor entered; but what was his surprise to see—not the features of Captain Delaware, but those of Walter Harrison, or Sailor Wat, as he had been called at Emberton, and who was certainly too nearly connected with one part at least of his long and hitherto unsuccessful search to be beheld without emotion. Beauchamp and the young sailor gazed at each other for a moment without speaking; and even the courier—doubtful, from the astonishment evident in his master's countenance, whether he had admitted the right person—stood at the door for a moment, and stared at them both in turn.

He soon received a sign, however, to depart; and, closing the door, he left Beauchamp and the sailor alone.

"This is a strange visit, certainly!" said Beauchamp, flinging himself into a chair, and gazing in some perplexity upon the countenance of Wat Harrison, which was pale, worn, and haggard, in a frightful degree.

"You have sought me, Mr. Burrel," said the young sailor, in a tone of calm determination; "and now you seem surprised to see me! What is the meaning of this?"

"I have certainly sought you, sir," said Beauchamp, not yet having caught the right end of the clue; "but, most assuredly, I little thought you would present yourself uncompelled—Are you aware that this visit is dangerous to you?"

"Not a whit!" said Wat Harrison, boldly; "and I do not care a d—n if it were;—but I say, not a whit! You are not a man, sir, to ask me here in order to betray me. I knew that well enough before I came."

Beauchamp now, for the first time, perceived the mistake. The young sailor, well dressed, and offering the external appearance of a gentleman, had gained that appellation from the jeweller, the mind of whose hearer, already filled with the idea of Captain Delaware, had at once become impressed

with the notion that the person described was no other than that officer. The height and the fair complexion had aided the rest of the circumstances; and Beauchamp now found that he had invited the visit of one of the murderers of the unhappy miser of Ryebury, in such a manner as to preclude him from taking advantage of his coming, to cause his apprehension. He hesitated, indeed, for he felt that perhaps the duty of bringing the culprit to justice should be paramount; but the word honour, so often falsely construed, was so even with Beauchamp, and he could not bring himself to do that which his conscience told him he ought to do. Although the contest between reason and prejudice was severe, yet he was not long in forming his determination; and rising again, after a moment's thought, he said, "Young man, your coming here has originated in a mistake. From the description given by the person who sent you, I thought he spoke of Captain Delaware, when he really alluded to yourself; but as the mistake was mine, not yours, I will not take advantage of it to give you up to justice. Nevertheless, remember that I am not ignorant of your crime; and that, although I suffer you to depart from this house, and will give you time to seek your place of concealment, yet I hold myself bound to give notice to the Parisian police—who have orders from the government to aid in arresting you and your accomplices—that you are within the walls of Paris, and that, therefore, if you escape, it is their fault."

"It will not be so easy to arrest me, Mr. Burrel," answered the young man, in the same calm tone in which he had spoken before, "unless I like it myself. So you sent for me by mistake? Well, I had hoped that there was one man on earth that knew how to work me properly—But no matter! And you took me for Captain Delaware, did you?—God bless him, wherever he is, for a noble gentleman and a gallant officer! So, they tell me they have accused him of the murder, and made him fly his country, and that he is to be dismissed his Majesty's service;" and as he spoke, the calm tone was lost, and he was evidently working himself up to a pitch of excessive fury—"And if he is taken he is to be tried," he continued—"and there is already a coroner's verdict against him—and that he will be hanged to a certainty—and that his good name is already blasted for ever—and that poor Miss Blanche will weep her heart out for him—and poor old Sir Sidney will die of grief for his son's fate—and all for a crime that he did not commit—and, d—n your eyes, do you think I am going to stand all that? No, never! Weren't they kind to me when never a soul was kind to me in all the world? and didn't they stand by me when every soul abandoned me?

And am I going to see them all go to ruin and to misery, because I myself and that black villain have brought damnation upon my own head? No, no, never you think that! Why, it was bad enough before—and every time I thought upon their going and murdering the poor old man, while I kept watch in the passage, I was ready to go and give myself up, and beg them to hang me out of the way, that I might think no more of it; but now—now that I find all that it has done besides, d—me if I would not hang forty such fellows as that, rather than that the Captain should come to ill by it!"

From this confused speech, which Beauchamp listened to with eager attention, though certainly not without some surprise, he learned all that the judicious reader has already discovered, of what was passing in the mind of poor Walter Harrison. He saw, in short, that remorse had done its work; and that the fact of the crime in which he had taken part, having brought down such misfortunes on the family who had been his benefactors, had carried remorse to its natural climax of despair. It was evident, too, that his remorse was of that purer kind which is kindred to repentance, and that, at all events, he contemplated atonement; and Beauchamp felt confident that, by proper management, full and satisfactory evidence might now be procured of the facts necessary to exculpate William Delaware completely. He saw, however, at the same time, that the spirit with which he had to deal—wild, wayward, and violent—would require most skilful treatment to bring it to the point he had in view.

"You are heated," he said, "Walter Harrison; but if I understand you right, there is still a hope, through your means, of saving William Delaware from all the evils that you have brought upon him."

"Hear me, sir!" replied the young sailor. "Only tell me what is necessary to save him—and if you bid me hang a slipknot to the yard-arm, then put my neck in it, and cast myself off, I'll do it."

"I take you at your word," said Beauchamp. "There is but one way to clear him—but one way to restore him to that clear and honourable character which he always maintained in life, notwithstanding poverty."

"Ay, there it is!" cried the young man; "clear and honourable, and yet poor—as poor for his rank as I was for mine—ay, and I might have had a clear and honourable name, too—but never mind—never mind—it is all coming to an end soon!" And casting himself down in a chair, he pressed his hands over his eyes.

"You lose your self-command, Walter," said Beauchamp. "Be calm, and let us speak over this business rationally."

"Calm! calm!" cried the young sailor, starting up. "How the devil would you have me calm, when you are speaking of things that are burning in my heart like coals of fire? How can I be calm?"

"You came here," said Beauchamp, somewhat sternly, "with a fixed determination, I suppose, of some kind—either intending to do right or to do wrong—to make the only reparation that you can for the crimes you have committed, by delivering your benefactor from the consequences of your errors—or boldly to deny what you have committed. If you intend to do right, the first noble and generous determination that you have formed for long, should teach you to execute your purpose with the calmness and fortitude of a man."

"You say true, sir!" replied the youth, in a tone of deep melancholy. "You always say true; and if I had attended to what you told me when you brought me home from the fire that night, I should not have felt as I do now; but there is no use of talking of that—I did come here with the intention of doing right; and I will do right, if you will tell me how. What I want to do is, to clear the Captain of everything, and make it so plain that he never had any hand in the bad business, that even those old devils at Emberton shall have nothing to say. You were going to tell me the way when I stopped you. Now, I will stick at nothing, either on my own account, or that of others—for as to that accursed ruffian who entrapped me into the business, I have had many a black thought, when he sneers at me because I am sorry, to finish him myself."

"Your only way, then, to make the reparation you propose," replied Beauchamp, "is to give such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of the men who actually committed the murder—for, from what you have said, I am led to believe that you had no absolute share in the deed itself."

"No, no! None, none!" cried the young man, rapidly. "I did not know they were going to do it—they had promised me, with the most solemn oaths, not to hurt a hair of his head, and I knew nothing of it till it was all over."

"Well, then," answered Beauchamp, "if that be the case, you will not only be enabled to make, as I said before, the only reparation in your power for the ill you have done, but you will entirely clear Captain Delaware, and yet run no danger yourself; for in his Majesty's proclamation on the subject, I find that a free pardon is promised to any one of the parties—with the exception of the actual murderers—

who will bring his accomplices to justice. So that your life is safe."

"I care nothing about my life!" cried the young man, replasing into impetuosity. "What the devil, do you think I am going to turn a pitiful king's evidence, and make a bargain for my own neck, while I am hanging my fellows? No, no! I will tell all that I know—I will go along with them, and be tried with them, and hanged with them too, for that matter—I care not—if I am alive on the execution day. But I will make no bargains about my life—none—none—my days are numbered, Mr. Burrel!" He added, more calmly, "My days are numbered; and the last may come when it will—I will shake hands with it when it does. There is only one bargain I will make, and that I know you will grant me; for you were one of the few that were kind—it is about my poor mother I am talking. She has had sorrows enough, sir, and she shall only have one more for me; so, when I am dead, I hope you will promise to take care of her, and let her have enough—if the job do not kill her, which likely it may too; and that is the worst of it all; but, however, I have made up my mind, do you see, and so you must promise me that she shall have the old cottage and forty pounds a-year to live on; and if nobody else gives it, you must."

"Most willingly will I do it, upon my honour," replied Beauchamp.

"That is enough, sir! Quite enough!" continued the young sailor. "You and I, Mr. Burrel, are quits in some things—you saved my life once; and I can tell you, that if it had not been for me on that horrible night, you would either have been left with your throat cut at the door of the house, or have gone overboard, and to the bottom, as we sailed along."

"I imagined that such was the case," answered Beauchamp; "and all these things tell so much in your favour, that I cannot understand how you could suffer yourself to be led into such a crime as that which you have committed."

"I tell you, sir, I had nothing to do with it," cried the young man. "If I had been present, they should not have hurt a hair of his head—they knew that well enough, and therefore they left me below to keep watch. As to the robbery, that I did consent to; and that was bad enough, too—but then, that Harding had the tongue of the devil himself, to persuade one. He got round me when I was ill—he taught me to believe that all riches ought to be in common, and that no man should be wealthy, while another man was poor, and then he told me, that to take the money which the

old miser made no use of, and left rotting in his chests, could be no harm—and then he harped upon my mother's poverty and misery, and made things ten times worse than they were; so at length I consented, on condition that he would promise not to hurt the old man. Well, even then, when he came down all bloody, and I saw too well that they had killed him, I do think that I should have either shot him for deceiving me, or should have gone and given him up, as he deserved; but I saw that he felt what he had done himself, and there was something so awful about him just at that moment, that I do not well know why or how, but he got the mastery of me, and I did what he liked, till it came to killing you, which the woman wanted us to do, as you lay stunned at the door. Then my spirit got up again, and I was master of them all till we came over here. But now he has forgotten all that he seemed to feel then—that Harding, I mean—and he talks about it quietly, and sneers and laughs, and looks coolly at me, while he is speaking of things that would make one's blood run cold—and he persuades himself that it is all right."

The strong excitement under which the young sailor laboured, afforded Beauchamp every means of drawing from him the whole details of the murder, and the events that followed; and he found that the crime, at least as far as the robbery went, had been concerted long before it was perpetrated. The moment for executing their plan had always been postponed by Harding himself, who had assured his accomplices, that a large sum of money, which he knew was to be paid into the miser's hands, had not yet been received; and Beauchamp easily divined that the murderer had alluded to the sum he himself had drawn for, through the instrumentality of the unhappy money-lender. So completely organised had been the whole design, that a French cutter, engaged by young Harrison, had actually lain upon the coast for several days, in order to carry the three culprits to Havre, whence they were instantly to embark for America. The master of the vessel, however, tired of waiting, had at length left the coast on the very night that the murder was committed; and the only means of escape that the four accomplices found, when they reached the beach, was the boat which the young sailor had provided, with money furnished by Harding, for the purpose of conveying them from the shore to the ship, without the necessity of making signals, which might have betrayed them. The woman had, indeed, nearly brought the coast-guard upon them, by accidentally falling into the sea as they embarked, and screaming for help; but, nevertheless, they got her into the boat, and

pushed off before any one came up. On their arrival in France, the young man added, they had taken, under Harding's direction, those measures of precaution which had baffled Beauchamp and the officers in their pursuit, and had at length arrived in Paris, where he, who might be considered as their leader, had boasted that he could lie concealed if all the police of France and England were set upon his track. Here he proposed to sell a variety of different articles of jewellery and plate, which he and his companion had contrived to bring with them, and then to take ship for the land of Columbus, as they originally had proposed. Harding, the young sailor said, had soon lost all appearance of that remorse which he had felt at first; but he described him at the same time as living in a state of reckless debauchery and excitement, from which Beauchamp argued that the never-dying worm was still tremendously alive within his bosom. He drank deep, Walter Harrison added, without getting drunk. The woman whom he had brought with him, and had before seduced, he treated with contempt and cruelty. He gamed also continually, in the lower and more brutal resorts of Parisian blacklegs and madmen; and, gratifying every passion to excess, it was evident that he was striving to drown the voice of remorse in a tide of gross and eager licentiousness.

"It is a fearful picture," said Beauchamp. "But now tell me, how and when we can bring this atrocious villain to punishment. You, my poor young man, he has misled and betrayed; and I do not even know that his crime towards you is not of a deeper die than that which he committed on the person of the wretched old man at Ryebury. He could but kill the body of the one——"

"Ay, and of the other," interrupted the young sailor, "he has condemned the immortal soul!"

"I hope not!" said Beauchamp. "Life is still before you, if you choose to live; and I know of no circumstances in which life is so inestimably valuable to man, as when he has been greatly criminal; for every year that he remains here may, if he will, be filled with the golden moments of repentance. But once more, how can we apprehend this villain?"

"Ay, he is a villain!" answered the young sailor; "if ever there lived one, he is the man;" and he was proceeding again to stray from the subject, when Beauchamp recalled him to it, and mentioned the necessity there would be of applying to the French police; but at the very idea the other started wild away.

"No, no, no!" he cried, "that will not do. He's a brave man, though he be a ruffian; and he shall never say that I

took odds against him, because I was afraid of him one to one."

"Then how do you propose to act?" demanded Beauchamp, in some astonishment. "This man must be taken, and brought to punishment, if you would keep your word with me, and clear the character of William Delaware."

The young man mused sullenly for several minutes, merely muttering, "He shall—he shall be taken. Hark you, Mr. Burrel," he said at length, looking up boldly and steadfastly, "you are a brave man. I have seen you do brave things. Now, there is this Harding and another; and here are you and I—that is two to two, and fair play. If you choose to go with me to-morrow night, I will take you to where those two are alone; and if we do not take them, and tie them hand and foot, it is our fault; but d—me if I take odds against them!"

The proposal was certainly as strange a one as ever was made, and as unpleasant a one as could have been addressed to Henry Beauchamp, who was naturally fearless, and, consequently, did not see one-half of the dangers in anything proposed that most other people would have done; but, at the same time, he had not the slightest inclination to run himself into scrapes of any kind, without necessity; and he could not help perceiving that the business was at once a perilous one, and one which might be much better performed without his interference. In the next place, he did not think the occupation particularly dignified or becoming; and thirdly, he did not at all like the eclat it would produce, and felt most exquisitely annoyed at the very idea of the romantic interest of the story, as it would figure in all the newspapers, and be told in all the coteries. It was quite enough, he thought, to have been made to drown himself for the amusement of the public; and certainly something too much, to be obliged to apprehend two murderers, vi et armis, without any cause or necessity whatever.

"Well, sir, will you do it?" demanded the young sailor, seeing that he paused upon his proposal.

"Why, I think not," answered Beauchamp.

"D—me, then!" cried the other; but Beauchamp interrupted him in that commanding tone which no one knew better how to assume.

"Hush, sir!" he said. "You forget yourself, and who you are speaking to. Call not down in words those curses which I trust that your present and your future actions may avert, however much the past may have merited them. In regard to your proposal—in the first place, I am not a thief-taker; and consequently the task does not become me. In

the next place, by the plan you suggest, the great object I have in view is likely to be defeated—I mean, the bringing these men to justice, in order to clear Captain Delaware. Suppose, for instance, that by any accident we should be overpowered by them, we lose his only hope; and even if we overpower them, having no legal authority to do so, any one who happens to be near may give them such aid and assistance as will enable them to escape, and foil us entirely."

"I will tell you what, sir," said the young man, sullenly; "I'll go some length, but I will not go all. To prevent them getting away any how, you may put the police round the house, if you like—but only you and I shall go in upon them; for I will not take odds against them anyhow; and if you are afraid to go, why——"

"I am not afraid to do anything, sir!" replied Beauchamp. "And though it is not at all necessary, and though perhaps it may be foolish of me to do it—yet, rather than lose any evidence in favour of Captain Delaware, I will do what you propose; that is to say, I will go in with you alone, in order to master these two men, if we can: but it shall be on condition that the agents of the police be stationed round the house, in such a manner as to prevent their escape, whether we succeed or fail."

"That is what I say," replied the young sailor. "Let us have a bout with them, two to two fairly; and then, if they kill us, why, there will be still men round the house to take them."

"I had forgot," answered Beauchamp, "that, as you say, we may be both killed in this business; and if you should be killed, pray, what evidence is there to convict either of these men? If you really intend to do what you have promised, it will behove you to make a full and complete declaration of the whole facts, and sign them before two or three persons, previous to entering upon this undertaking."

Walter Harrison paused and thought, and Beauchamp urged him strongly to take the precaution he proposed; but he did not succeed. "No," said the young sailor, at length; "No! I will put it all down in my own handwriting, which can be well enough proved by the ship's books, and I will sign it with my name, and I'll give it to you to-morrow night; but I'll not go it all over again before any one else, till I tell it all for the last time—there, don't say any more; for I won't do it—I don't like this police business either; but I suppose it must be done—so, now I will go. You will find me, to-morrow night at ten o'clock, opposite that jeweller's shop. I will not fail you, upon my honour;" and so saying, he walked towards the door. Ere he reached it, however,

he again turned, and coming nearer, he said, "Mr. Burrel, I trust to your honour, that when you have got me there with the police, you will not let them go into the house with us—mind, two to two is fair play. He shall never say that I brought odds against him!"

"I have given you my word," said Beauchamp, "and I will certainly keep it."

"Well, then, good night, sir!" replied the young man; and opening the door, he passed out into the anteroom; but ere he had taken two steps beyond the threshold, he again returned to bid Beauchamp bring his pistols with him. "He always has his in his pockets," he said; "so it would be unfair that you should be without."

"I will take care to come prepared," replied Beauchamp; and his visitor once more left the room. He paused a moment in the anteroom, and hesitated as if he had something more to say, but the instant after he quitted the apartments, and was heard descending the stairs with a rapid step.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Well!" thought Beauchamp, when the young sailor was gone—"Well, this is a stupid business enough; and I certainly shall not particularly like being shot for this young rascal's whim; but it cannot be helped, and my will being made, it is not so troublesome as it might otherwise have proved. At all events, dear Blanche, I am perilling somewhat to fulfil your request, and clear your brother's name and character."

It is wonderful how much this last thought reconciled Henry Beauchamp to an undertaking which he had before looked upon as absurd, and in some sort degrading. Such little collateral associations are strange conjurors; and as Beauchamp thought over the whole matter, and mingled up the idea of Blanche Delaware with every particular which he had before considered in the abstract only, his expedition became bright and chivalrous, and he lay down to sleep, anxious for the coming morning.

The first eight hours after Beauchamp rose, on the following day, were devoted to securing the assistance of the French police, in the undertaking in which he was about to engage; and although this time may appear long, yet every moment of it was employed in removing the many difficulties

which, with wise precaution, the French government threw in the way of the arrest of aliens, for crimes committed in a different country.

The previous proceedings, although they had smoothed the way, had not entirely removed all obstacles; and the young Englishman, though backed by the influence of the whole of the English diplomatic agents at Paris, found the time barely sufficient to accomplish the necessary arrangements.

The dull official forms must, of course, have no place here; and it is only necessary to say, that, after the necessary orders were given, the French officers of police shrugged up their shoulders at the plan which Beauchamp was obliged to propose in conformity with his engagement to Walter Harrison, declared that Monsieur was perfectly welcome to take the first brunt of the business upon himself, and promised to meet him at the rendezvous a little before the time which the young sailor had named.

All this being at length settled, Beauchamp returned to his hotel, dined, loaded his pistols, took one glass of wine less than usual, for fear of embarrassing his hand, and then sat waiting impatiently for the appointed hour. By the time it arrived, the sky had got out of humour, and it was raining furiously; but still there were a great many Parisians afoot, all pattering along under their pink umbrellas, as merry as crickets; and many a tender salutation did Beauchamp receive, in his way to the house of the jeweller.

He reached the street a few minutes before the time; but the police were at their post, and he found that six powerful men were in readiness to back his exertions. Walter Harrison, however, had not appeared, and a quarter of an hour elapsed without any sign of his keeping the appointment he had made. The chief of the French police hinted broadly, that beyond doubt he had deceived the English gentleman and Beauchamp himself began to suspect that the young culprit had repented of his promise.

Before another minute had elapsed, however, the tall athletic form of the widow's son was seen coming quickly along on the other side of the street, and Beauchamp instantly crossed over and spoke to him.

"All is right, sir," said the sailor. "They are both at home, and are even now engaged in pigeoning a young greenhorn, whom they have inveigled to play with them. If they do not get his money that way, I should not wonder if they cut his throat—so, come along, and let us make haste."

"I am ready," said Beauchamp; "but you promised to write down——"

"Ay, ay! there it is," said the young man, putting a paper into his hand. "Give it to one of those fellows, who are of the police, I suppose—but make haste, and come along; for if they do not get the poor lad's money by fair means, they will by foul. I heard them talk about throwing something into the Seine, and getting a sack ready—and I do not like such words from such folks——"

"Nor I!" replied Beauchamp; "nor I! You walk on, and we will follow;" and, crossing over to the other party, he gave the paper he had received to the commissary who headed them, and then followed as fast as possible upon the steps of the young sailor. Walter Harrison advanced rapidly; and, passing up one of the short streets that lead from the Rue de Rivoli into the Rue St. Honoré, he turned to the right in the latter, and then made his way to one of the smaller streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue St. Anne. At length he stopped; and, pointing forward to a house of respectable size and appearance—"That is the house," he said; "if these fellows halt in the passage, they are sure not to lose their game, for there is no back entrance."

Beauchamp explained to the leader of the party the words of the young sailor, and they now drew near the house in a body, keeping profound silence. The men were then carefully stationed round the door; and Beauchamp, with one pistol in his hand, and the other thrust into his bosom, between his coat and waistcoat, followed his guide into the house, the door of which, as is frequent in Paris, stood open as a common entrance to all the different floors.

It were in vain to say that Beauchamp felt no sort of anxiety. The very excitement of the whole business made his heart beat with a quicker pulse than usual; and he listened eagerly, as they ascended the stairs, for any sound that might announce their proximity to the chamber of the murderers. He was not long kept in expectation. At the first door they reached, after passing the 'entresol,' the young sailor paused, and rang the bell twice.

As soon as ever he had done so, he whispered to Beauchamp, "I will take this one, whoever it is, that opens the door. You run on, and secure the other in the room beyond. I will follow in a minute."

Almost as he spoke, the door was thrown open, and the coarse face of Tony Smithson, the man who had gone down

with him in the stage-coach to Emberton, was exposed to Beauchamp's sight. He had a light in his hand, and the moment he saw that there were two men on the stairs, he would have started back, and retreated; but the young sailor sprang upon him at once, grappled with him tight, and in an instant both rolled together on the floor of the little anteroom. Beauchamp rushed forward to a door which was standing a-jar on the other side of the chamber, and whence there issued forth an intolerable smell of brandy-punch, together with the sounds of laughter. He reached it in a moment, but not before the noise of the struggle without had caught the ears of the tenants of the room; for when Beauchamp flung wide the door, he found the murderer Harding already, with a pistol in each hand, retreating into one corner of the room, from a table covered with bottles, glasses, and bowls, cards, dice, and markers; while the unfortunate wretch, whom we have already seen as the dirty maid of the old miser at Ryebury, now tricked out in all the gay smartness of Parisian costume, stood by the table, with sudden terror and agony in her countenance. The moment her eyes rested on Beauchamp's face, she saw that her fate was sealed, and with a loud scream, she fell, fainting, by the table. Harding, however, with scowling determination in his brow, placed his back in the corner, and pointed the pistol he held directly towards his former master.

Beauchamp paused, and levelled his own weapon at the villain's head, exclaiming sternly, but coolly, "Throw down your arms, sir! You know I never miss my aim!"

Harding paused for a moment, slightly dropping the point of his pistol; and Beauchamp, as they stood face to face, at the distance of half a dozen yards, could see the corners of his mouth draw gradually down, into a sort of sneering smile. The next instant he replied, "I know you never miss your aim. I do; and, therefore, this is the best use I can make of my bullet;" and he rapidly turned the pistol towards his own head.

Beauchamp heard the lock click as the murderer raised the weapon, and seeing that the clear exculpation of William Delaware, which would be gained by the trial of the real culprit, might be lost by the act about to be committed, he brought the muzzle of his own pistol slightly round, and pulled the trigger. The report rang through the room, and the arm that Harding was raising against his own life, fell powerless by his side. A slight cry of pain escaped from his lips at the same moment, but the fury that the wound stirred up flashed forth from his eyes; and with the other pistol in his left hand, he rushed forward upon Beauchamp,

coolly calculating, even at that terrible moment, that from the unsteadiness of his left hand, he could not revenge himself as he wished, unless he brought the mouth of the weapon close to his adversary. Beauchamp, eager to take him alive, closed with him instantly; the young sailor, hearing the report of fire-arms, left the other ruffian but half tied, and, rushing into the room, endeavoured to wrench the pistol from Harding's hand, as he strove with the strength of despair and hatred to bring the muzzle close to Beauchamp's head. At the very moment that he seized it, the murderer had in a degree succeeded in taking his aim, and was in the act of pulling the trigger. The flash and report instantly followed; and the ball, cutting along Beauchamp's cheek, laid the cheek bone bare, but passed through the hair on his temple without doing him further injury. Walter Harrison, however, at the same moment relaxed his hold, started back, and catching at one of the chairs with a reeling stagger, sunk down into it, while a torrent of blood spouted forth from his right breast, a little below the collar. Beauchamp, too, heated by the struggle, seized the murderer by the neck, and, with a full exertion of his strength, which was not inconsiderable, dashed him prostrate on the floor, then set his foot upon his chest, and, drawing the pistol from his bosom, commanded him to be still, if he would escape without another wound.

Such was the situation of all parties, when three of the French police, warned by the report of fire-arms that a severe contest was going on above, and thinking they had waited quite long enough, rushed up the stairs and entered the apartments. The first that they found was the man whom Walter Harrison had left, and who was now calmly untying himself, and about to decamp. He, however, was soon better secured, and committed to the charge of the officers below, while the others advanced into the room beyond, and found the young sailor bleeding profusely, while Beauchamp with some difficulty kept his prisoner to the ground, as Harding, aware of the fate that ultimately awaited him, strove, by means of struggles and imprecations, to make his former master shoot him on the spot.

The moment, however, that he beheld the officers of justice, he became perfectly quiet; and it surprised even Beauchamp to see how easily he relapsed into that calm, cold taciturnity which he had formerly displayed. The first care of every one was the young sailor, for whom a surgeon was immediately procured; and, after some difficulty, the bleeding was stopped. The unhappy woman, who had fainted, was then recalled to life, and the wound in the

chief culprit's arm was dressed. A proces-verbal of all the events was then taken and attested, for the purpose of being transmitted to England, and the three prisoners were removed, though not without a warning from Beauchamp, that it would be necessary to withhold everything from Harding which might enable him to commit suicide.

"Diantre, monsieur!" cried the commissary, who was a small wit in his way—"you are going to hang him when he gets to England; why should you care if he saves you the trouble by hanging himself here?"

"Simply, sir," replied Beauchamp, who, though he could treat great events with indifference, had a sovereign aversion to jesting upon serious subjects; "simply because it may be necessary to exculpate the innocent, as well as punish the guilty."

There now only remained Beauchamp, two police-officers, who kept possession of the apartments, the surgeon, and the young sailor. The latter was immediately removed to the bedroom he had occupied since his arrival in Paris, and there, by Beauchamp's directions, the surgeon agreed to sit up with him all night.

The lad had never uttered a word since he had received his wound, although Smithson had poured forth a torrent of abuse upon him, which the murderer's situation rendered at least excusable. When he saw Beauchamp's anxiety for his comfort and welfare, however, he said, in a faint voice—"You are very kind, sir—you always were kind; and I am glad I got the shot; for if I had not turned the pistol my way, it would have gone through your head. So that is some comfort, though it would need a good many actions to make up for all the bad ones I have done. But, however, don't trouble yourself about me, for I shan't die just yet—I am sure of that. All my work is not done yet. I sha'n't live long when it is done, even if they do not hang me when I get to England."

"As I assured you before," replied Beauchamp, "there is no chance whatever of such a thing; and I trust you are beginning to think too properly of your own situation, to dream of attempting your life."

"Oh, no! I was not thinking of that," replied the young man. "I one time thought that I should be glad almost that they did hang me, just to show those rascals that I had not turned king's evidence against them with any thought of myself. But I think differently now I have got this shot. But, mind, I do not make any bargain. I will go over as a prisoner, and they shall do with me as they like. I'll not flinch—no, no, I'll not flinch!"

Here the surgeon, who did not understand a word that was said, and of course did not like the conversation, laid his hand upon Beauchamp's arm, and gently hinted that perfect quiet was absolutely necessary to any hope of the wounded man's recovery; and that gentleman accordingly left him, with a few kind and consolatory words. He then called the surgeon into one of the other rooms, and making him dress the wound on his cheek, which had been hitherto neglected, he gave him a substantial earnest of after-reward, explaining to him that the life of the young man under his care was of the most immense importance as a witness; and begging him, at the same time, to watch every turn which the injury he had received might take, in order that his dying declaration might be drawn up, if recovery were found to be impossible. He then left his address, and returned home; but although extremely fatigued, both by exertion and excitement, he did not lie down to rest till he had seen a courier dispatched to London, bearing the news of the capture of Harding and his accomplices, and begging that, without a moment's delay, officers, properly authorised, might be sent over to convey the prisoners to England.

The messenger was ordered to spare no expense, and to lose no time; and he certainly performed his task with very great rapidity. In the meanwhile the news of Beauchamp's adventure spread through Paris, as if it had been a country town; and, as it may well be supposed that the hotel in which he lodged was one of the first places in which the story developed itself, Mrs. Darlington received it at her toilet the next morning, and instantly wrote a billet to Mr. Beauchamp, beseeching him to let her see him as soon as he was up. This, folded in the newest fashion, and sealed with the newest seal, reached Beauchamp as he was concluding his breakfast; and in order to quench the worthy lady's thirst, he at once walked down to her apartments.

Mrs. Darlington was as delighted as 'bienseance' would permit her to be, at the sight of Henry Beauchamp, with a black patch on his cheek, which confirmed all the pretty story she had heard before he came; and her questions, though excessively small and quiet, were, like the little hairy savages that scaled Sinbad's ship, innumerable, and attacking him on all sides.

Beauchamp detailed the whole events; and, if he had been a little bored by the lady's interrogatories, the joy and satisfaction which Mrs. Darlington expressed on hearing that the exculpation of Captain Delaware could now be fully made out—the sincere personal gratification she seemed to feel, made up for all, and placed her high in his good graces. The

assurance that, amongst the culprits, one at least of the personages who had set fire to her house was more than probably included, did not seem to interest her half so much as the proofs obtained of William Delaware's innocence; and she returned again and again to the subject, declaring, that nothing would be so delightful as to write to dear Blanche, and give her the whole details.

"Pray, are you in possession of her address?" demanded Beauchamp, assuming as indifferent a tone as it was possible for a man in his situation to affect.

"No, indeed!" replied Mrs. Darlington; "but she will write to me soon, of course."

Beauchamp was mortified; for he had caught at Mrs. Darlington's words at once, as if they gave the full assurance of discovering the abode of her he loved, without further search or uncertainty. After musing for a moment, however, he said, "I hope, my dear madam, when you do write, you will offer my best compliments to Miss Delaware—who, I dare say you know, is my cousin—and tell her that I have endeavoured, as far as was in my power, to obey the commands with which she favoured me. As I doubt not that you will give her the details of all this story, you may assure her in the most positive manner, from me, that her brother's character will at once be cleared of every imputation, and that all who know him will hail his return to England with the utmost joy."

Mrs. Darlington perceived, as plainly as woman could perceive, that Henry Beauchamp was in love with Blanche Delaware. She had long ago seen it would be so, and now she saw it was so; but yet, for one-half of Europe, she would not have let Beauchamp understand that she saw anything of the kind. She had known so many excellent arrangements of the sort spoiled outright by some impolitic, good-natured, stupid friend, jesting upon the subject, or insinuating his mighty discoveries, before Cupid was bound hand and foot—which is never the case ere the matter has come to a declaration—that she answered in the most commonplace way it is possible to imagine—assured Beauchamp that she would give his message correctly—declared that she doubted not Blanche and her father would travel for a year or two; and then began to speak of the beautiful bonnet brought out by Madame ——, of the Faubourg St. Germains.

Beauchamp, though he would have seen through every turning of the good lady's tact, had anybody else been concerned, was completely blinded in his own case—like all the rest of the world — and, after having given a scientific

opinion upon the brides 'de blonde' and the 'bordures,' he rose and took his leave, fully persuaded that Mrs. Darlington was as ignorant of his love for Blanche Delaware as he himself was of millinery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Beauchamp's courier returned from London, bringing with him the officers who had been in Paris already on the same business, both of whom paid the young gentleman a great many compliments on his skill and proficiency in their particular branch of science; but, as Beauchamp would very well have dispensed with such a flattering testimony of his abilities in thief-catching, we shall not give the somewhat circumlocutory praises of the officers at length.

By this time the young sailor was already so far convalescent that no doubt was entertained of his ultimate recovery.

Harding, Smithson, and the woman, Sarah Ings, confined apart, had already shown the difference of the characters in the different manner in which they had borne their situation. The woman wept continually, declaring with loud lamentations that she would tell all she knew, if they would but spare her life. Smithson alternately stormed and raved, or gave way to brutal jests and wild merriment. Harding remained calm, cool, and silent, quite disposed to philosophise upon his situation with any one who would philosophise with him, or to sneer at any who offered him one word of compassion or admonition; but at the same time, a great deal too wary to utter a syllable that might endanger the slight hope of escape which still remained.

After a brief interview with Beauchamp, the officers, with very natural impatience, hastened to visit their prisoners; and R——, who held the principal post, immediately addressed Harding with a great deal of civility. "Oh, Mr. Harding," he said, "I am sorry to see you here!"

"You mistake, sir," said Harding, "I do not remember you at all."

"What! not when you were secretary to Mr. ——, the banker who failed?" said the officer. "Poo! poo! that cock won't fight, Master Harding. Don't you remember going up with me to Mr. Tims's, at Clement's Inn; and how, after a great piece of work, he promised not only to drop proceedings against you, but to get you a good place into the bar-

gain if you would tell all about the embezzlement of the money; and a good place he did get you, I find—pity you didn't keep it when you had got it. Howsoever, that is no business of mine—but you must take part of a shay with me over to England, Master Harding; and I dare say we shall be very good friends on the road."

"Perhaps so!" replied the prisoner; and, after a few more words, the officers proceeded to visit the other male culprit. To him, however, their manner was totally different. "Ha! Tony, my lad!" cried the head officer; "how do you do this many a day? Why! how the devil were you such a soft chap as to get taken in for such a bad job as this—but you had nearly bilked us all, by jingo!"

"Oh, R——," he replied, "Oh, it is a bad job indeed! But I knew well enough that I was well nigh up to my weight; and that d—d fellow, Harding, persuaded me, you see! But I say, R——, tell me, is that young Harrison like to die? I would not take to talking, and plead the king's pardon, do you see!"

"No, no!" answered the officer. "No chance of his dying, Tony. It's all up with you! They must hang two of you: and if any one gets off, in course it will be the woman."

At this hopeless picture of his situation, the ruffian first swore and blasphemed for two or three minutes, and then, relapsing into the other extreme, cast himself down and wept like a child.

"Fie, fie, Tony!" cried the officer. "Die game, anyhow—why, I thought you were more varment than that comes to—a man must die somehow, you know—and you have had a long pull at it, my lad—besides, it's all nonsense when one knows that it must be so."

"Aye, that's the job!" said the prisoner. "If one could but think of some way of getting off——"

"Don't you fancy that," replied the officer. "Why, look ye now, Tony, if you could get off for this last job, I'll tell you as a friend, they'd hang you for that burning business; for they've got proof enough against you for that."

This last argument seemed completely to dispel all Mr. Anthony Smithson's objections to being hanged: and after two or three exhortations to those virtues that Bow Street officers expect from thieves, the two children of Mercury went on to visit the female prisoner. As, however, we have fully as great a disgust to scenes of low vice and misery as our readers can have, and only introduce them where compelled to do so in accordance with truth, we shall leave the

officers to conduct their prisoners to England, and proceed to notice the events which occurred to Henry Beauchamp.

That gentleman then set off from Paris with all speed, as soon as he had seen the prisoners safely consigned to the Bow Street officers. He well knew that such adventures as those in which he had lately been engaged could not fail to find their way into the mouth of Rumour; and for many reasons he wished to reach London ere that lady was ready to go trumpeting before him, like the man with the box on his back, who walks before Punch.

He succeeded tolerably well; so that the fact of Henry Beauchamp being living instead of dead, upon dry land instead of under the sea, was not known to above fifty thousand people when he arrived in London. Out of this number about a thousand had congratulated Lord Ashborough on the resuscitation of his nephew; but the noble lord had so impressed upon his mind that his nephew was dead, that he would not believe a word of the story, gravely saying, that he would give it implicit credence as soon as he heard it from any one who would say that they had seen Henry Beauchamp with their own eyes.

As none of those could be met with, and as the story could be traced to no authentic source, Lord Ashborough held fast his conviction; and, up to the hour of Beauchamp's arrival, continued in the same belief.

It was late at night, when Beauchamp did once more reach London; and as he imagined that he was not likely to find anything prepared for his accommodation in the house of a dead man, he directed the postboys to drive to a hotel, rather than his own dwelling. It was later the next morning when he rose than he had purposed overnight; but nevertheless, as soon as he was up, he set forth for Lord Ashborough's, and walked immediately into the drawing-room, where, although the Earl himself had breakfasted and gone out, Beauchamp had soon the pleasure of holding his sister in his arms.

Maria Beauchamp was not in the least surprised to see him, as she had long before received convincing assurances of his safety—and though she was as light-hearted a girl as ever danced through life, unconscious of its sorrows—yet when she first met her brother, after all the dangers he had encountered, the tears rose up in her eyes, from the more vivid impression which his presence produced upon her mind of the loss she would have suffered had the report of his death been true.

The conversation between Henry and Maria Beauchamp was long, and to them highly interesting; and had the world ever been known to forgive those who write dialogues be-

tween brothers and sisters, it should have been here transcribed for general edification. In the course of it, Maria made herself acquainted with a great many of the secrets of her brother's heart, and, in return, gave him a far more clear and minute insight into all the views and designs of Lord Ashborough and his worthy agent, Mr. Peter Tims, than Beauchamp had imagined so gay and careless a girl could have been shrewd enough to obtain. From her quick-sightedness in all those particulars, however, in which the interests of William Delaware were concerned, Beauchamp concluded —a result which his sister certainly neither wished nor anticipated—that the surmise of his good lawyer, Mr. Wilkinson, was not so far wrong as he had at first imagined; and he paused, musing with a smile over all the events that yet might be in the wheel of fortune.

The anatomy of a smile is sometimes a curious thing, and that which then played upon Beauchamp's lip was not without its several parts and divisions. In the first place, the idea of his gay, smart, and dashing sister falling in love with a frank, straightforward, simple-hearted sailor, who had neither rank nor fortune to offer her, made him smile. In the next place, he felt the slightest possible shade of disappointment at the idea of Maria Beauchamp not marrying the Marquis of this, or the Earl of that; and the very absurdity of such a feeling in his bosom, of all the bosoms in the world, made him smile at himself; and the two smiles blended together. The third part of the smile, and which was the purest part too, proceeded from many a sweet feeling and bland hope which rose up when he suffered his mind's eye to gaze on into futurity, and thought of the varied sorts of happiness it might be in the power of him and his to bestow on a noble and generous race, weighed down by long misfortunes.

As soon as all these feelings had had their moment and were gone, and he had given his sister an account of his wondrous accidents by flood and field—Beauchamp wrote a brief note to his uncle, informing him of his return. He set forth with all speed to his lawyer's chambers, in order to carry on the whole proceedings in exculpation of William Delaware, as rapidly as possible.

In regard to his conversation with Mr. Wilkinson, it may be only necessary to notice, that Beauchamp found, that with prompt and judicious zeal, that gentleman, on discovering that some thoughts were really entertained at the Admiralty of inflicting a signal disgrace upon Captain Delaware for his evasion, had waited personally on the First Lord, and had laid before him that part of his client's deposition which ad-

mitted, in the clearest manner, that the money had been placed by Beauchamp himself in the young officer's room; thus showing, that the chief circumstance of suspicion was taken from the evidence. He further informed him that Beauchamp had discovered the real murderers, and was at that moment in pursuit of them; and he ended by beseeching him to pause ere he took any step in the proceedings which rumour declared to be in agitation.

He was met, in every respect, with frank and gentlemanly courtesy, and was assured that nothing could be more gratifying to his Majesty than to find just cause for suspending that expression of his indignation against any officer in his service which the stern voice of justice could alone compel him to publish.

So far everything was satisfactory. "And now," said Beauchamp, "all that remains to be done for the present, is to open the eyes of my uncle to the conduct of this base attorney of his."

"Spare us! spare us! Mr. Beauchamp, I beg," said Mr Wilkinson. "But, without attempting to defend attorneys, who, as a body, have got a bad name, not so much, I believe, from having more rogues amongst them than are to be found n other professions, but from having greater opportunities of roguery, allow me to say that I am afraid you will find it a difficult thing to open your uncle's eyes."

"Why, my dear sir?" demanded Beauchamp; "we can prove the facts. Tell me why?"

"Oh, for many reasons," answered Mr. Wilkinson, musing, and perhaps not exactly liking to state the real basis of his opinion. "The fact is, it is like eating garlic, Mr. Beauchamp, or drinking spirits, or taking any other of those things which a man nauseates at first, but gets very fond of by degrees—when a person grows fond of a rogue he gradually gets to like him beyond any one else, and soon finds he cannot do without him."

Beauchamp smiled, though there was a slight sort of mistiness about the conclusion of Mr. Wilkinson's illustration which he did not exactly like. However, he pressed him no further; and having learned that Lord Ashborough was carrying on a suit against Sir Sidney Delaware in regard to the annuity, with somewhat sharper measures than the generality of the profession considered reputable, he obtained the bill for ten thousand pounds which Mr. Tims had presented in lieu of the money due from the Earl, and then returned to his uncle's dwelling.

Lord Ashborough was now at home; and although Miss Beauchamp had broke the news of her brother's return, and

added a number of reasons and apologies for his not having sooner communicated the fact of his safety, the Earl was still both agitated and offended, and his reception of Beauchamp showed a strange mixture of pride, and irritation, and pleasure.

"And pray, Henry, may I ask," he said, after their first salutations were over—"for your movements and their causes may both require the same diplomatic secrecy which you have of late so skilfully displayed—may I ask, why you were pleased to conceal your existence from your nearest relations? Your sister has, indeed, already favoured me with so many reasons, that I confess I have become puzzled and bewildered by the number, and would fain hear your own motives from your own lips."

Beauchamp was not a man to make any excuse to any one, if he had not a true one ready at his hand. In the present instance, he thought it best to tell Lord Ashborough the simple truth, and then leave him to receive it as an excuse or not, as he might think best; taking care, at the same time, to word it with all due respect and kindness, in deference to the affection which he knew his uncle felt towards him.

"The fact is, my dear sir," he answered, "for the first fortnight or three weeks after you had fancied me drowned, I was not at all aware of such a report. I was first detained at a cottage, with a dislocated ankle, and next ill of a fever at Hartford Bridge; and at the time I learned the rumour of my own death I was under the absolute necessity of going to Paris, in order to pursue the miscreants who committed the horrid murder, of which you have heard, at Ryebury. As I was the only person who could prove the facts against them, or lead to their apprehension, the rumour of my death I knew would throw them off their guard; and therefore it was necessary to leave it uncontradicted. Besides——"

"But, surely," interrupted Lord Ashborough, who, though strongly inclined to inquire further concerning the murderers, was resolved to press Beauchamp home in the first instance. "But, surely, you could have trusted to my discretion in the business!"

"Undoubtedly, my lord!" replied Beauchamp; "and I need not tell you that, under any ordinary circumstances, you would have been the very first person to whom I should have communicated my situation, and whom I should have consulted in what I was undertaking."

Lord Ashborough bowed his head with a placable smile, and Beauchamp continued—"But I could only have done so by writing to you, or by coming to see you. The latter, of course, was out of the question; for I was not willing to trust

my secret to your host of servants, and to write was equally impossible, as there were circumstances to explain which could only be done personally."

"How so? Why so?" demanded the Earl.

"That is what I was about to explain," answered Beauchamp. "That the man of all others whose greatest interest it was to foil me in endeavouring to bring the murderers to justice—with the exception, of course, of the murderers themselves—is your confidential man of business and lawyer, Mr. Peter Tims."

Lord Ashborough started; for though this carried him back again to the subject of the murderers, it was not exactly in the way he best liked. "You are mistaken, Henry," he said; "quite mistaken! No man has been more anxious in thought, or more strenuous in exertion, than Mr. Tims, to bring the murderers of his uncle to justice—You forget their near relationship, and he is a great deal too—too—too——"

Lord Ashborough would fain have added, "too honest a man!" but the words stuck in his throat, and, as he paused, Beauchamp finished the sentence for him—"too great a rogue, my lord, he most certainly is, ever to think of relationship where interest is concerned. I found that out some time ago, ere I took the step of removing my affairs from his hands to those of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson."

Lord Ashborough drew himself up—"I believe, sir," he said, "that I have not acquired the character in the world of a man who is likely to employ a rogue, either from folly or knavery. But, as you have brought a serious accusation against my ordinary man of business, I shall of course expect you to substantiate it fully."

"That I will do completely to your lordship's satisfaction," replied Beauchamp; "and indeed, I trust you will believe me, my dear uncle, when I assure you, that the certainty of this man having, by a gross misrepresentation of facts, involved you in circumstances which will be very painful to you when you learn all the details, is the great inducement which makes me accuse your agent at once to yourself, before I take such measures as must expose him to the world."

Beauchamp paused; but his intimate acquaintance with his uncle's character had given him a sort of intuitive insight into what was passing in his mind, and had revealed a great many secrets which, as his nephew, he would rather not have learned, but which of course he acted upon in his transactions with the noble Earl. In the present instance, he clearly perceived that Lord Ashborough's vanity was getting irritable at the very idea of having been cheated, and that, at the same time,

Curiosity and Anxiety were both striving hard to keep Vanity down till they were satisfied; but that Vanity, being the strongest, was likely to have her own way. Under these circumstances, Beauchamp thought it would be best to throw in a little soothing matter to quiet the more restive animal of the three, and keep her from kicking. He therefore added, after a very brief pause, "I know, my lord, that the plans of this man, which could deceive even your sagacity, must have been very deeply and artfully laid; and unless"—he added, anxious not to assume superior wisdom—"and unless accident and his own imprudence had thrown into my hands the means of establishing his knavery beyond a doubt, I should not have ventured to make such a charge as I have brought against him. I know, however, that you are too candid not to yield to conviction; and my purpose is to request that you would call him to your presence, and suffer me to ask him a question or two before you."

"Of course, Henry," replied the Earl, "I am not only willing, but anxious in the highest degree to give up my mind entirely to truth; for, besides the great personal interest which I have in the honesty of a man to whom I confide so much as to this Mr. Tims, the abstract love of severe and impartial justice also requires that I should hear any evidence that can be brought in support of so grave a charge so boldly made. But tell me," he continued, feeling that there were particular points on which he would not particularly like to have his agent questioned in his presence; "tell me, do the questions you intend to put refer to any affairs of mine, or to affairs of your own?—for I know you have several times employed this Mr. Tims. If to mine, I must say nay, most decidedly; for I can permit no one either to investigate or to interfere with business which I am competent to manage myself."

"My questions will refer entirely to business of my own, my lord," replied Beauchamp. "With yours I should never presume to meddle, though I feel perfectly convinced that you would not have proceeded at law against Sir Sidney Delaware for a sum that had been already paid to your agent, had you not been persuaded by an infamous villain that the money received did not constitute a legal payment, inasmuch as he affirmed that it was the fruits of a robbery."

Lord Ashborough turned a little pale; but he had canvassed the matter so often with Mr. Tims, and considered all the contingencies so accurately, that he was prepared at every point for defence. "Nay, Henry," he said, assuming a benignant smile—"Nay; I see which way your prejudices lead you. The most connected evidence would not convince either your-

self or your sister of that unhappy young man's guilt—but even taking the converse of the matter, and supposing that he has been accused erroneously, still you do great injustice to the poor little lawyer, who surely commits no great crime in believing a man to be guilty, against whom a coroner's jury, after calm investigation and mature deliberation, have given a verdict of wilful murder."

"In the first place, my lord," replied Beauchamp, coolly, "in regard to William Delaware, as I know your lordship would be as much delighted to see his innocence clearly established as any one——"

"Oh, certainly!" interrupted the Earl, with all the energy that a man adds to a falsehood in order to make it weigh as much as truth. "Certainly—let justice be done, and let the innocent be cleared!"

"Well, then," added Beauchamp, with the slightest possible touch of causticity in his manner, "you will be delighted to hear that there remains not the slightest doubt of William Delaware's innocence. In the first place, I myself was encountered by the murderers at the very door of the dead man's house; was carried off by them, after being knocked down and stunned; which facts I can distinctly prove against at least two of them. In the next place, I have the confession of one in my writing-desk; and, in the third place, three of them are by this time at Dover, on their way to trial. The fourth is in Paris, but in safe hands too, and will come over to give his testimony as king's evidence."

Lord Ashborough again turned pale; and while he declared that he trusted most sincerely it would prove as his nephew anticipated, he rang the bell, and, in an under tone, bade the servant bring him some of the drops to which we have before seen him apply.

Beauchamp's next sentences, however, were in some degree a relief, for they afforded a fair hope of being able to cast all the blame upon Mr. Tims, should it be rendered necessary by any after-disclosures. "So much for that matter, my lord," added his nephew; "and of course I cannot blame Mr. Tims for not divining all the evidence that might ultimately be collected to exculpate Captain Delaware. But what I intend to establish is, that at the very time that he, Mr. Tims, was retaining—under the pretence that the money was a part of his uncle's property—a sum which of right belonged to you, having been paid in redemption of the Emberton annuity—that at the very time he was urging you on, to proceed severely against a family which he taught you to believe was criminal—that while he was doing all this, he was perfectly well aware that the money did not belong to his uncle; that it had never

been the fruits of robbery; and that I must have placed it in the chamber of Captain Delaware, as that gentleman himself asserted."

"If you can prove that, Henry," replied his uncle, "I will admit that I have been most grossly deceived, and will abandon the fellow for ever; but I should like to hear what evidence you can bring forward in corroboration of these assertions."

"You shall hear, my lord, to-morrow, if you will order him to be here after breakfast," replied Beauchamp. "You must confront the accused and the accuser, before you judge—and in the meantime, as I intend to dine with you, I will go and dress, for it is growing late."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Earl of Ashborough was a good deal disturbed, as the reader who remembers all the transactions which had before occurred, may easily imagine. His nephew's return had certainly been a very joyful event; but it was not unaccompanied by many drawbacks. There was the probable overthrow of all his schemes against the Delawares, a considerable loss of money, which was painful to the noble Earl just in proportion as his fortune was immense; and last, not least, there was a chance—a strong chance—of certain unpleasant imputations lighting on his character, and of certain disclosures being made in regard to his plans, which he would rather have died to avoid than live to see.

The hatred which had rooted itself so deeply in his heart against Sir Sidney Delaware had lost none of its freshness—the spirit of revenge kindled long ago, and fed with a thousand slight circumstances through a long lapse of years, had lost none of its intensity; but still, for the time, the fear of shame and dishonour was paramount, and the Earl cursed the day in which he had been tempted to risk one rash step in pursuit of vengeance.

He determined, however, to lay the whole blame upon Mr. Tims, and if Beauchamp could prove that the lawyer had reason to know that Captain Delaware was innocent, to affect vast indignation at his conduct; and to cast him off with all those signs of abhorrence and contempt which would exculpate himself in the eyes of the world from any participation in his evil designs. Of the pecuniary loss, too, which he was

likely to suffer by the whole affair, he resolved to make the most, as a proof that he had been himself deceived and plundered; and by exclaiming loudly against the perfidy of his agent, to cast a dark shade of suspicion upon every assertion that Mr. Tims might make, as springing from the mere malice of a discharged agent. There was one subject of self-gratulation in Lord Ashborough's breast, which was doubly sweet, as it flattered his ideas of his own wisdom, and afforded the best point in his situation with regard to Mr. Tims. This was the fact of never having committed himself on paper, in regard to the family of Sir Sidney Delaware, or his purposes of revenge against them, and he resolved to make the most of that also.

After long consideration of all these particulars, he believed that he could luckily act towards his lawyer exactly as if he himself had been perfectly pure and spotless in the whole transaction. He accordingly sent off a note to Mr. Tims, requesting his presence at eleven o'clock on the following day, having determined that, in the first instance, he would give the attorney every sort of gentlemanly support in his encounter with Beauchamp; but that, if he found Beauchamp's charge could be made good against the lawyer, he would instantly throw him off, dismiss him from his employment, and treat him with proud and indignant contempt.

All these thoughts occupied him some time, and it was late before he entered the drawing-room, where his nephew and niece were already waiting; but the space thus employed had fully restored his equanimity, and the dinner passed over with a degree of cheerfulness and ease on his part, which Beauchamp had almost doubted that his uncle would be able to maintain. The evening was equally tranquil; his wandering nephew's adventures seemed to afford Lord Ashborough fully as much matter of interest and amusement as it did to Miss Beauchamp, and their party broke up late, after a pleasant and a tranquil night.

The next morning, the Earl perhaps felt a little nervous; but he had that most blessed quality, which was very probably the subject of the Scotch pedlar's aspirations, when he added to his prayers, "God send us a good conceit of ourselves;" and being very far from ever thinking that he could, by any chance, have acted grossly amiss, he soon recovered from his more serious apprehensions of the world's censure, though he admitted that occasionally mankind did put a misconstruction on the most virtuous conduct; but he trusted that his own character was too well established to permit of such a result.

With the proud consciousness—we cannot say of virtue—but at least of an established reputation, which often does quite as well, the Earl proceeded after breakfast to his library, accompanied by his nephew, and, ringing the bell, desired to know whether Mr. Tims had arrived. The servant replied in the negative; and, after having ordered the lawyer to be admitted when he did appear, he turned to Beauchamp, observing that the fellow had grown somewhat negligent of late, since he had succeeded to his uncle's fortune.

The Earl had scarcely concluded his sentence, when Mr. Tims himself appeared at the door, bowing low, with habitual reverence for turkey carpets and ormolu, even before he was completely in the room. On seeing Beauchamp, which he did the very next moment—as that gentleman had placed himself at the bay-window, and turned round on hearing the door open—Mr. Tims had nearly fallen prostrate on the floor; and pale, pale, pale, did he become, with the exception of the red climax to his nose, which remained of its own ruby hue, while all around grew white. His impudence, however, which was a very phœnix, and was ever renewed from its own ashes, came instantly to his aid; and, advancing with a smile of simpering joy, he exclaimed, "Goodness, Mr. Beauchamp! I am surprised, sir, and delighted to see you. We all thought you drowned!"

"Of your surprise, Mr. Tims," replied Beauchamp, "I have no doubt; of your delight, I am not quite so sure; and as to my being drowned, I know every one believed it, and no one more thoroughly than yourself, Mr. Tims."

"I beg pardon, sir!—but you seem offended," said Mr. Tims, assuming the aspect of injured innocence. "I meant no offence, sir—My lord, have I said anything offensive?"

"No, Mr. Tims!" replied Lord Ashborough. "Be so good as take a seat, sir; I am inclined to believe that my nephew misconceives you; but he will explain himself; for it is on his business I sent for you."

"Oh, is that the case?" exclaimed the lawyer, who began to feel somewhat perplexed at his situation. "If your lordship had let me know that such was your purpose, I might have come prepared."

"I acted, Mr. Tims, as I thought best," answered the peer, coldly; "and I confess I do not see what need you could have for preparation."

"Why, I do think, sir, all things considered," replied the lawyer—"I do think your lordship might have given me intimation; as the business in which I am engaged on your lordship's account——"

"Has nothing on earth to do with my nephew, nor my nephew with it, Mr. Tims!" replied Lord Ashborough, sternly. "We will keep to the point, sir, if you please. Henry, you said you had some questions to ask this person; you had better ask them."

"Person!" muttered Mr. Tims, fidgeting on his chair. "Person!"—but he had soon more serious matter to think of; for Beauchamp, approaching the table, sat down at the side next the window, and taking out his pocket-book, spoke in a calm, mild tone, which had grown infinitely more moderate than at first, as he saw the terrible agitation under which the unhappy man laboured.

"Mr. Tims," he said, "I neither want to puzzle you nor to annoy you, by what I am going to ask; but there are certain matters on which you must give a full explanation, both for my satisfaction, and my uncle's——"

"No, no, Henry, pardon me!" interrupted the Earl; "the business is yours alone—I am perfectly satisfied for my part—I have heard a charge, but no proof; and, consequently, I should be doing injustice to Mr. Tims were I to be dissatisfied."

"My lord, the business is certainly mine," replied Beauchamp; "but it is also yours to the extent of at least ten thousand pounds, if not more—but to the point. My first question is, Mr. Tims, how you came to detain, upon the pretence that it had been stolen from your uncle, the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, paid by Sir Sidney Delaware to you, as Lord Ashborough's agent, when, at the time you detained it upon that pretext, you perfectly well knew that it had not been stolen, and that it had been put in Captain Delaware's room by me?"

"But I never knew any such thing, sir!" replied Mr. Tims. "I believed, as everybody else believed, that Captain Delaware, when he murdered my poor unhappy uncle, had stolen those notes; and permit me to say, sir," he added, assuming a slight touch of bluster—"I had better cause to believe such to be the case, than you have to accuse me of actions I should despise, sir. What reason had I to suppose you placed the money there?"

"Stop, Mr. Tims," said Beauchamp, calmly, "do not lose your temper; remember, sir, passion may throw you off your guard, and you will yet have occasion for all your wit in your exculpation.—You ask what reason you had to suppose I placed the money in Captain Delaware's room; I will tell you, Mr. Tims. First, because, amongst your uncle's papers, you found an acquittance in my handwriting for the

sum of fifteen thousand pounds, received by him on my account from Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson——"

"But, sir!" cried Mr. Tims.

"Do not interrupt me, sir," said Beauchamp. "Next, I say, because you found a note of hand signed by me for the sum of ten thousand pounds, advanced to me by your uncle, and dated on the very day on which he was murdered, poor man!"

"But listen to me, Henry," said Lord Ashborough. "All this does not show that Mr. Tims knew that these several sums had been appropriated by you in the somewhat Quixotical manner that, as it proves, they were employed."

"It is, at least, a strong presumption that he might have known it if he had liked," replied Beauchamp; adding, with a smile, "especially when he knew me to be of a Quixotical disposition, and when William Delaware himself pointed me out as the only person likely to have placed them there—but you must remember, also, that the sum was precisely the same, and that, knowing I had received it——"

"I must once more interrupt you, Mr. Beauchamp," said the lawyer, with a dignified air; "but you are, and have been, assuming as facts what are not facts. I did not know that you had received that sum—I found no document—at least, I have as yet found no document—amongst my late uncle's papers, which refers to the sum of fifteen thousand pounds received on your account, and handed over to you in due course; and therefore, sir, the basis of your argument is erroneous, although—as my noble patron declares, with his usual candour and perspicuity—even were it all true—had I discovered, by the papers of which you speak, that my uncle had paid you the precise sum, still I had no proof that there was any connection between that fact and the payment made to me at Emberton Park."

"There was a strong presumption at least, Mr. Tims," replied Beauchamp, who had listened with the utmost calmness; "and I certainly cannot prove that you have found the document referring to the fifteen thousand pounds, as yet. Allow me to compliment you on the introduction of those two words—I certainly cannot prove that you have found my acquittance to your uncle."

"Well, then, Henry," said the Earl, with a benign smile to Mr. Tims, "I think your evidence halts."

"Your pardon, my lord," replied Beauchamp; "I am only disposing of one part of the subject first—you may not have found it, Mr. Tims, as yet; but let me tell you, sir, that you

must find it, or account to my solicitors for fifteen thousand pounds received by your late uncle on my account."

Mr. Tims turned very red; for he saw that he was nearer to the horns of that ugly beast, a dilemma, than he had imagined. Still, however, he thought that he had triumphantly opposed Beauchamp's charge, and therefore he replied, with a very tolerable degree of coolness, "I will search for the papers, sir, and of course act according to the best of my judgment afterwards."

"And in the meantime, Mr. Tims," continued Beauchamp, "we will speak of the ten thousand pounds which I received from your uncle. I think you acknowledge, or at least tacitly admit, that you found my note of hand for that amount amongst your uncle's papers—indeed, it was only extraordinary that you should overlook the acquittance, which was pinned to the note, and which you must have separated from it, before you got it stamped, and presented it to my solicitors, in payment of the sum of ten thousand pounds due to me by Lord Ashborough, as the balance of our guardianship account."

Mr. Tims's face grew red, and white, and yellow, and blue, by turns. Never was there such a prismatic complexion as Beauchamp's last speech produced.

Lord Ashborough watched them all, and then demanded, "Did you presume, sir, to stop money which I commissioned you to pay, in the way to which Mr. Beauchamp alludes?"

Mr. Tims was 'aux abois,' and consequently he turned upon the weakest of his pursuers. "I did, indeed, my lord," he said, in a significant tone—"I did it for the best, both in accordance with your lordship's views and interests, and my own poor judgment; and I am perfectly ready to explain my motives either to your lordship alone, or in the presence of your nephew."

Lord Ashborough changed colour also; and, bowing his head haughtily, he said, "That is unnecessary, Mr. Tims; we will speak of all that concerns myself hereafter."

"Oh, just as your lordship pleases!" said the lawyer—"I have nothing to conceal."

"I am glad to hear it," said Beauchamp, willing to spare his uncle any unpleasant discussion; "for now we come to the most inexplicable part of the whole transaction. I say inexplicable, because it is quite so to me, how a man of your sagacity could commit such an oversight as, at the very time he was accusing an innocent person of murder—at the very time he was retaining in his hands twenty-five thousand pounds unjustly, on the plea that they had been stolen—at

the very time he was carrying on two ruinous suits at law against an honourable man for money which had been already paid—I say, that it is inexplicable to me, how, at the very time he was doing all this, he should commit such an oversight as to present to my solicitors this note of hand, on the back of which is written, in my own writing, the numbers and dates of all the notes I received from his uncle, and which are the numbers and dates of the very notes that he was at that time attempting to show were stolen. Look at it, my lord, and read:—'Numbers and dates of notes received from Mr. Tims of Ryebury'—and conceive, how avarice must have taken hold of a man, ere he could commit such an egregious blunder. Why, Mr. Tims, could you not wait a few days—a week, a fortnight, even a month—to make sure that the fishes had me safe, before you presented this note? By Heaven, I should have thought such a thing impossible, had I not often, or rather always, seen, that, by what would seem a law of Providence, the most egregious rogues are always sure to leave some door open to detection."

Mr. Tims had remained as one struck dumb—not that he had overlooked the fact which Beauchamp now brought forward; for he had remarked it from the first, and knew that it might speak strongly against him; but the desire of retaining the ten thousand pounds had blinded his eyes to one-half of the consequences, and diminished his estimation of the other—had made him confidently believe that Beauchamp was really drowned, and that if he were not, he would never remember the memorandum he had made on the night which gave birth to so many events. The folly of his conduct, however, now appeared to him in the most forcible manner, and for the moment completely overpowered him. Quirks, quibbles, evasions, impudence itself, all deserted him, till, by the most fortunate chance in the world, Beauchamp pronounced the word rogue, which instantly called anger to his aid.

"Rogue, sir! Rogue!" he exclaimed, starting up, while the whiteness of consternation was succeeded in his countenance by the rubicundity of wrath; "Rogue, sir! The word is actionable! Did you call me a rogue?"

It was too much for human patience. "Yes, sir!" replied Beauchamp, "I did! and I do! I call you a rogue, because I have proved you one! I look upon you as a contemptible blackguard, as I have long done; and if you stare in my face with that air one moment more, I will kick you from that door into Grosvenor Square—and the passage is a long one!"

Mr. Tims instantly dropped his eyes to the ground, and Lord Ashborough interfered. "You are too warm, Henry!" he said, seeing evidently that Mr. Tims must be given up, and therefore that he might as well assume the character of the dignified unimpassioned judge. "You are too warm; but you have made out your charge most completely. Mr. Tims, you are no longer my solicitor. You must have known, sir, that this Captain Delaware, whatever faults he may have, and whatever crimes he may have committed, had not obtained the notes in question by robbing your uncle—you must have known it, sir—you could not help knowing it; and I conceive, that your having deceived me into taking a great many steps which might bring my character into disrepute, if it were not, thank God, pretty well established—I say, I conceive your having done so, to be more base and criminal than even the sort of frauds you have committed in regard to the different sums of money—which, depend upon it, shall be strictly investigated."

Loud insolence not having proved at all successful, Mr. Tims now resorted to dogged impudence. "Your lordship may find cause, upon a little reflection," he said, moving gradually towards the door, "to make your measures towards me somewhat more lenient than you propose. I should be sorry to injure your lordship's well-established character; but, of course, if I am attacked, I must defend myself; and I will take care that my defence shall be public enough. There are two or three little transactions which your lordship will think over, and determine upon having laid open or not, as you please."

"Do you hear the fellow's insolence?" demanded the Earl, turning with a half-smile towards his nephew. "Mr. Tims," he added, "you are scarcely worthy of contempt. I fear no true statement of anything I have done; and I shall take care, if you make any false one, that you shall be severely punished. You have deceived me, sir, grossly; you have represented people to me as criminal who were really innocent; and you have laboured to stir up my indignation against them for your own base purposes. Do not answer me, sir, but quit the room and the house; and I shall take care that your accounts be called for, and examined by one who will look into them thoroughly."

Thus saying, the Earl, with a proud and dignified wave of the hand, pointed to the door. Mr. Tims would fain have added a few words more; but Lord Ashborough waved him forth again; and there was also a cloud lowering upon Henry

Beauchamp's brow, which boded no very pleasant results from further insolence; so that, upon second thoughts, Mr. Tims judged it best to make his exit tranquilly. This he was suffered to do; and the door closed upon him for ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

We must now for a time leave Henry Beauchamp and the Earl of Ashborough, and turn to the small, neat country town of ——, in the jail of which place, Harding, Smithson, and Sarah Ings, were at length safely lodged, within a few days after Beauchamp's return to his native country. Walter Harrison, skilfully treated and carefully attended, was soon able to undertake the journey to England; and as the fixed determination he had shown to further the ends of justice, at all risks, left no doubt of his sincerity, he was permitted to act without restraint, and proceeded steadily towards his destination—indeed more rapidly than his feeble state properly admitted. Presenting himself uncalled before the magistrates of the town, he informed them at once of his name, required them to receive his voluntary confession, and in consequence to commit him to prison. The first part of his demand was of course acceded to; but it was intimated to him that, in consequence of his firm and determined conduct throughout at least the latter part of the dark business in which he unfortunately had been engaged, he would not be deprived of his liberty.

To the surprise of the magistrates, however, he replied that he knew nothing of their forms and manner of proceeding in these matters, but that he had made up his mind to the line of conduct he was to pursue. On no consideration whatever, he said, would he be king's evidence—a term for which he seemed to entertain the most extraordinary aversion. His confession, he said, was clear and ample, made without any promises of pardon or favour, demanded or given; he would therefore go to prison like the others, and be brought to trial like them; but as he was guilty, he would plead guilty in regard to the robbery, though not in regard to the murder. This, he said, was his firm determination, though he would be found ready at any time to give every sort of information that might be required to make out the case against his accomplices and himself.

As the jail delivery was to be held in a few days, the

penance of imprisonment which he thus imposed on himself was not great; but even the short period of confinement to which he thus voluntarily subjected himself, seemed greatly to affect his health and spirits. In vain the governor of the prison, under the idea that apprehensions in regard to his ultimate fate were preying upon his mind, assured him that the king's pardon, promised by proclamation to any but the actual murderers, secured him from all danger. He replied, that he feared nothing but his own thoughts; for that, since he had come back to the country and the county in which the terrible crime wherein he had participated had been perpetrated, a heavy cloud had seemed to come over him, which he could not shake off. His bold, daring, and impetuous manner was now all gone, and in its place there appeared a deep silent sternness, somewhat impatient of contradiction, but determined rather than violent. The great loss of blood he had sustained had rendered him as pale as ashes, and anxiety and suffering had bowed his powerful frame, and left him merely the shadow of what he formerly was. Some apprehensions, indeed, appeared to be entertained by those who watched, lest he should become so ill as to be unable to undergo the business of the trial; but in this they were deceived; and his strength, on the contrary, appeared greater, and his energies more alive, on the day before that appointed for the assizes.

At length the day arrived, and all the usual formalities having taken place, the heavy list of crimes was adverted to, and lamented by the judge; the grand jury was exhorted and sworn, and proceeded to its functions. As every one expected, the first bill brought before them, which was that against Captain William Delaware, for the murder of Mr. Tims at Ryebury, was at once thrown out. Not so, however, that against Harding and his accomplices, which, being found a true bill, was immediately proceeded with.

All our readers are most probably acquainted with the solemn array of a court of justice, though an interesting, always a painful scene. On the present occasion, of course, from the blackness of the crime committed, and the many extraordinary circumstances that accompanied and followed it, the excitement produced was great, and the court crowded in every part. The preliminaries having been gone through, the four prisoners were put to the bar, and a good deal of confusion ensued, from the endeavour of the various spectators to obtain a full view of the accused—the class of women who frequent criminal courts, struggling forward to see the culprits with more than masculine boldness.

Harding, who was beyond doubt, a handsome man, first advanced to the bar. He was dressed with scrupulous care; and, with his neck wrapped in a thick black cravat, his double-breasted waistcoat buttoned up to his chin, and his dark frock-coat thrown back from his chest, he looked very much like the private secretary of a German prince. His cool and tranquil air, and easy carriage, might have been construed into the expression of conscious innocence, but for a slight, very slight sneer, that curled the corner of his lip, entirely different from the indignant expansion of the nostril with which innocence sometimes meets a false accusation. He gazed for a single instant round the court, and then withdrew his eyes, while all the reporters scribbled rapidly in their note-books, preparing to make him a newspaper wonder, and hand him down to posterity as one of the heroes of the gallows. The next that came up was the well-known Tony Smithson, who, though he had confronted more than one court of justice on previous occasions, now, from the magnitude of the offence, and the certainty that his conviction would follow, had lost all self-command, and approached the bar pale, trembling, and agitated. Next appeared Sarah Ings, with the most persevering of all human passions, vanity, still uppermost. Dressed forth in all the gay and vulgar smartness of the Rue de Vivienne and the Palais Royal, with a touch or two of rouge upon her cheeks to hide the ravages of apprehension, she presented herself before the court that was to try her, and the judge who might have to doom her to death, with a simpering and coquettish smile, thinking fully as much of the impression of her charms and her finery upon the spectators, as of her awful situation and its probable results.

Last appeared Walter Harrison, with a bold, firm step, a bright red spot in each of his pale cheeks, and his eye sparkling from feverish excitement. He leaned his hand upon the bar, and after gazing rapidly and boldly round the court, fixed his eyes upon the clerk of the arraigns, as he proceeded to read the indictment.

That document was conceived in the usual tenour, and comprised all the various acts which the prisoners could or might have committed in the perpetration of their crime, with all the legal terms and expressions necessary to prevent dubiety.

Harding listened to every word with scrupulous attention; and it was observed that at several of the counts in the indictment, which described the act that he had committed with much greater precision than he had expected, he set his teeth

hard. On the question being put to each of the prisoners—"How say you, guilty or not guilty?"—the first three pleaded "not guilty," and what is termed put themselves upon their country, or, in fact, appealed to a jury. Walter Harrison, however, in a bold, firm voice, replied, at once, "Guilty of the robbery, but not guilty of the murder;" and consequently it was found necessary to proceed on his trial also, upon several of the counts in the indictment.

The trial then went on; and as the reader is already aware of the greater part of the evidence that could be brought forward, it shall be but briefly recapitulated here. The foot-prints on the floor of the room where the murder had been committed, and the mark of the hand on the wall, were proved to correspond exactly with the feet of Harding and Smithson, and with the hand of the latter. The marks in the passage were also proved to have been caused by the feet of the young sailor; and evidence was given that Harding had paid the master of a cutter, hired to carry them to France, with one of the notes which could be traced to the possession of the miser of Ryebury a few days before his death. The ci-devant smuggler, Billy Small, swore positively to the persons of Harding, Smithson, Harrison, and the woman, and detailed fully the particulars of their arrival at his house, with a gentleman whose ankle was dislocated, and who had evidently received a severe contusion on the forehead. The Bow Street officers proved the state of the prisoners' apartments in Paris, the considerable sums of money there found, and a variety of minor facts, which all aggravated the suspicions against them; and as the principal witness, Henry Beauchamp was at length called, in order to establish the fact of the prisoners having been on the very night of the murder at the house of Mr. Tims, and having thence proceeded direct to the cottage of the smuggler. As he entered the witness-box, the cheek of Harding turned a shade paler, but at the same time his eye flashed with an expression rather of rage than fear. As his former master went on, however, he recovered his composure, and listened calmly, while Beauchamp clearly and distinctly detailed all the events, from his second visit to Mr. Tims's house, on the night of the murder, till he was delivered over to the care of the old smuggler and his family.

Throughout the trial, Harding had acted as his own counsel, and now he proceeded, with an air of cool, determined effrontery, to cross-examine his former master, mingling skilfully those questions which might tend to exculpate himself with those which he thought would annoy the witness.

"Allow me to ask you, Mr. Beauchamp," he said, "whether, while I was in your service, you ever detected me in any act of dishonesty?"

"To speak but candidly," replied Beauchamp, "I never did."

"So far, then, your evidence is favourable to me," continued the culprit. "Now, pray tell me, Mr. Beauchamp, what was your own errand at the house of Mr. Tims on the night in question—or rather, what became of you between the first and second calls which you made at his dwelling during that evening?"—and he fixed his eye upon the witness's countenance with a degree of sneering triumph at the pain he imagined the question would cause him. But Beauchamp answered with the utmost coolness.

"I do not know," he said, "that any law would oblige me to reply to a demand which does not seem to bear upon the case; but, nevertheless, I have not the slightest objection to do so. I had, on the first visit I paid to the unhappy man who was afterwards murdered, received from him the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, which I had promised to advance on mortgage on the estate of my cousin, Sir Sidney Delaware. From the house of Mr. Tims I went straight to Emberton Park; and having discovered that Captain Delaware was absent from home, I took the liberty, as a relation and intimate friend, of entering his room, and leaving the money, enveloped in a packet, upon his dressing-table, purposing to give him intimation of the fact next morning."

"Was not that rather a hazardous action, sir?" demanded Harding, with cool insolence; "especially when there were so many thieves abroad?"

"Not more so, it would seem," replied Beauchamp, "than to carry it in my pocket from Ryebury to Emberton when you were in my neighbourhood; but luckily it happened that you neither knew the one fact nor the other."

Harding was silent for a moment, finding that sarcasms were edged tools, which he had better not employ against Beauchamp, who had full strength to turn them back upon himself, with that sort of cold calmness which made them a thousand times more stinging. The pause was so long, that Beauchamp at length asked, "Have you any other question to put to me?"

"Yes—several!" replied the prisoner. "Several. Why did you not give the money into the hands of Sir Sidney Delaware himself, when you found that his son was absent?"

"Because it was not my pleasure to do so," replied Beau-

champ. "I must submit to the court, whether these questions are relevant."

The judge at once supported the witness's objection; and the prisoner being told that he must absolutely confine himself to the matter before the court, proceeded. "Pray, Mr. Beauchamp, was the moon shining at the time of your return to Ryebury?"

"It was shining brightly," replied Beauchamp.

"Then it was by the light of the moon that you recognised me amongst the persons coming out of the miser's house?" demanded the prisoner.

"I did not say that I recognised you in the slightest degree," replied his former master, "till I found myself in the boat upon the water."

"Then you positively did not recognise me at all at the miser's house?" said Harding, with a smile of triumph.

"I did not," answered Beauchamp; "all I saw, on the opening of the door, were the forms of three men and a woman standing in the passage. As the moon was not shining directly on that side of the house, I could not distinguish their features so perfectly as to swear to any one of them; but the foremost of the men was exactly of your height and appearance, and I have already sworn, that I saw you in the boat after I recovered my recollection."

"Pray what space of time do you think had elapsed," Harding next demanded, "between the time of your return to Ryebury and your finding yourself in the boat?"

Beauchamp replied, that of course he could not exactly tell, but he imagined that it must have been more than an hour.

"If such was the case," said the prisoner, "then the moon, which you say was shining on the western side of the miser's house when you reached the door, must have set before you recovered your senses; and I should like to know how, without any light on a dark night, and with your thoughts confused, as they must have been, after such a blow as you describe, you could recognise me so as to swear to my identity, when, by your own account, you could not stand up in the boat even for a moment."

"In the first place," answered Beauchamp, "the moon had not set, though she was setting, and her very position at the moment I did attempt to rise, showed me your features more distinctly than if she had been higher in the sky; for she shone at that moment under your hat. I was confused, certainly, and in that confusion I had very nearly called you by your name; but luckily I recollected in time the attack made

upon my own person, and the extraordinary circumstances in which I was placed, or probably the consequences might have been fatal to me also."

"He should not have touched a hair of your head!" said Walter Harrison aloud; and the eyes of the whole court were instantly turned upon him; but the young man paused, and looked towards Harding, adding—"I do not want to interrupt him! Let him say his say, and then I will say mine."

Harding had turned very pale; but he added eagerly—"One more question, sir, and I have done. Was this momentary and imperfect glance which you obtained of the countenance of one of the men in the boat with you, all which led you to believe that I was that person?"

"Although that glance would have been quite sufficient to satisfy me," replied Beauchamp, "what I had learned from that glance was confirmed by the sound of your voice, and by the fact of your having dropped this powder-flask out of your pocket upon the beach, when embarking for France; which powder-flask, you must well remember my giving to you some days before, because it did not measure the right charge for my guns."

"I never saw it before in my life," replied Harding, solemnly, and then ceased his interrogatories. The jury had listened to this cross-examination more attentively than to any other part of the evidence; and it was clear that the cool and collected manner in which the prisoner had sifted the testimony of his former master, had produced no small effect on several of the jurors. When Harding ceased, Walter Harrison turned to Beauchamp, and the eyes, not only of the whole spectators, but of his fellow-prisoners, were fixed upon him.

"Mr. Beauchamp," he said, "I am not going to do what they call cross-examine you, because I am sure you will tell the truth like a gentleman. But once, when we were talking about catching these fellows, you told me as much as that you had overheard what I said on that bad night to old Billy Small—will you have the goodness to let those gentlemen up there know what it all was?"

Beauchamp detailed the whole; and having suffered a brief cross-examination on the part of the other prisoners, he was allowed to retire. The evidence now given, together with the declaration of Walter Harrison, closed the case for the crown, and the prisoners entered on their defence. Smithson, who knew too well the proceedings of a court of justice to believe that he could mend his condition by his

own oratory, declined saying anything, except that he was innocent; to which he added all those ordinary but vehement asseverations, which render the bar of a court of justice an altar to impiety, whence falsehood and blasphemy reek continually up in the sight of Heaven. The woman appeared strongly inclined to speak in her own defence, but her words were drowned in an hysterical burst of sobbing; and Harding, with the young sailor, were left to address the court for themselves.

The speech of the first was as consummate a piece of special pleading as ever was drawn up in ancient or modern days. On the evidence against himself he commented with the utmost acuteness, and pointed out that there was no direct proof that he had ever been in the house of the unhappy man who had been murdered, except that afforded by the declaration of the young man, Walter Harrison, whose acknowledgment of participation in the crime, and evident desire to escape the punishment, by laying the whole of it upon other people, he trusted that the jury would remember and consider before they attached any weight to his testimony. Mr. Beauchamp, he continued, had never seen him in the house, or near the house. At least, though he threw out a suspicion, yet he had not attempted to swear that he had beheld him there; and although William Small—an acknowledged smuggler—had declared that he came to his cottage in the boat with Mr. Beauchamp and the rest, yet he did not state whether he was there as a voluntary agent or as under compulsion. In regard to the footmarks in the house, he argued, that they could not be held as proving anything; for, in the number of men who might be supposed to commit such a crime as that, how many would be found with a foot of nearly the same size as his? Had his clothes been found bloody? he asked. Had any of the implements of robbery and housebreaking been found upon him? No! And the whole case against him, he contended, rested alone upon the very doubtful testimony of the young sailor, and the fact of his having paid the freight of the cutter with a note which had been in the possession of Mr. Tims.

He now paused for a moment; and, after having taken breath, and eyed the jury to see what effect his oratory had produced, he went on, in a solemn and serious manner:—"Gentlemen of the jury;—having now commented upon the evidence against me, and stripped it of all those magnifying circumstances with which human malice is ever too prone to swell the charge against a person once suspected—having shown upon how slender a foundation rests the case in

respect to myself—I will proceed to explain to you fully and honestly every circumstance that appears at all doubtful in my conduct, trusting that the confession of some errors which I deeply regret, will not prejudice you against me in the consideration of the present accusation. When I came down to Emberton with Mr. Beauchamp—against whom I do not pretend to say a word, although he was somewhat imaginative in his ways of acting and thinking—I had frequent occasion to go on his business to the house of the unhappy man who has been so cruelly murdered; and where I was always received with a degree of kindness, which certainly would never have prompted the base return which I am accused of having made. I there became acquainted with the young woman at the bar; an attachment grew up between us; and having—upon some speculative principles of general utility, which I now acknowledge to have been foolish and wrong—taken up a prejudice against marriage, I obtained her promise to elope with me without any ceremony of the church. In one service or another I had amassed a considerable sum, and her wages also were long in arrear. She with difficulty obtained payment from her master; and it was determined that we should go off together. Our plans, however, were hurried by Mr. Beauchamp's sudden departure from Emberton; and, hearing that there was a French vessel on the coast, we resolved to set off that ill-starred night. Just as I was about to proceed to Ryebury to meet her at the appointed hour, I found her in the streets of Emberton, whither she had been sent by her master to Lawyer Johnstone's for some stamps, and we were returning to Ryebury in order to procure her clothes, when we met three men dragging along Mr. Beauchamp, apparently dead. I did not well know what to do; and, in a scuffle with the men, I was of course overpowered. They treated me humanely, however, I must say, and told me that they neither wished to hurt me nor the gentleman they had got; and if I chose to go quietly along with them till they were safe in France, whither they were going, they would then set me at liberty; but they vowed, with many imprecations, that they would not leave any one behind who could give information against them. I learned from this that they had committed some crime; but the impossibility of resistance, the desire of getting to France, and the hope of doing some good to my master, all induced me to yield quietly; and I accordingly got into the boat with them, and we went off. By the time we had reached the smuggler's cottage, however, I had learned enough to show me the horrid crime that had been

committed; and, before I had been there a quarter of an hour, this young man beside me, whom I have reason to believe was the principal actor in the Ryebury tragedy, whispered to me that I was in for it, as he termed it, and that, fair weather or foul, I must sail out the voyage with him and his companions. I asked him what he meant, and he then showed me, that if I went back to London, or peached, as he called it, I should certainly be suspected as accessory to what had happened. I was overcome with the horror of my situation; and, on my remonstrating and begging him to allow me to depart, he threatened, if I said another word, to make it out so that I should appear the principal in the murder. My courage and my resolution failed; and, weakly consenting to go with them, I suffered myself to be led on blindly, and do what they liked. The freight of the ship even I was compelled to pay, which I did with a pound note that Sarah there had received from her poor master the night before, and had given me to keep. After our arrival in France, I gave myself up to despair; my hopes and prospects seemed utterly ruined; and, to keep away thought, I gambled deeply. Fortune, however, favoured me, and I won large sums. Suddenly the news that Bow Street officers were pursuing us in Paris, added new anxieties to my mind, and often I thought to give myself up and tell all I knew. The apprehension that I would do so, it seems, induced the other prisoner beside me to be beforehand with me; and, on the night that I was taken, when I heard his voice without, and saw Mr. Beauchamp enter the room, I certainly made a desperate defence, having no hope of being able to establish my innocence against the conspiracy that was evidently got up to make me the scapegoat. This, gentlemen, is the plain straightforward story of what really happened. You must all see that I have had no time to make up such a tale, as I knew not what evidence would be produced against me. There stands the only witness I could bring forward to prove the truth of my story; but she, included in the same false charge, is prevented from giving evidence in my favour."

"It is all true!—it is all true!" cried the unhappy girl, weeping bitterly; and Harding proceeded—"I have little more to add, gentlemen. Mr. Beauchamp's evidence is generally correct, though he was mistaken in one or two particulars; but I trust that you will allow the good character that he has himself given me, to counterbalance the assertions that he has erroneously made. In conclusion, I have only to say, that my very heart and soul revolts at the thought of the crime with which I am charged; and although I have been

culpable in some things, let me trust that my sins have been sufficiently punished already by their consequences, and that a jury of my countrymen will not incur the awful responsibility of condemning an innocent man for a crime that never entered his thoughts."

With a fine person and graceful action, Harding delivered this address with so much effect, that a murmur of approbation filled the court when he concluded; and it was evident that the opinion of the jury was strongly affected by what he had said.

The gentlemen of the bar, however, whispered together with a significant smile, and one then remarked to another,—"He brought in the girl devilish neatly. The fellow must have some good in him for that."

"Poo!" replied the more experienced counsel to whom he spoke. "He could not have made up his own story without it."

The judge now repressed the noise in the court, and the young sailor came nearer to the bar to address the jury.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I can't make you a fine speech like this man, Harding, who, I begin to think, is the devil himself; for none but the father of lies could have got up such a string of them, do ye see! I told the whole truth in my declaration before the magistrates; and as you all know well enough, if what he has said were true, and I had wanted to betray him to screen myself, I might have been king's evidence, as the folks wanted me. My lord the judge knows that, and every one else; and so I should have saved my life to a certainty, and pocketed the reward. No—no! I had no such thought in my head, do you see; and now, gentlemen, I will tell you truly how it all happened. It makes little odds to me whether you hang me or not; for I shall not live three months if you don't; and Death is just as bitter to-morrow as to-day—though I never feared him much, somehow. The thing is this, gentlemen:—I have a poor mother, a widow, living at Emberton; and to see her next to starving always has been a sore heart to me. Well, there were only three people in all the world that ever were very kind to me. The first was my mother, who forgave me all my faults, and loved me notwithstanding all the sorrows I brought her. The next was Captain William Delaware, who, when I got into a scrape about poaching, and might have been sent to the hulks, took me aboard his own ship, treated me as kindly as possible, and sent me back with a better character than ever I had before. The next was Mr. Henry Beauchamp—though I always took his name to

be Burrel. He saved my life at the risk of his own; had me doctored and tended; was kind to me and my mother; gave me advice and encouragement, which would have been a blessing if I had remembered it, and promised me help if I behaved well. But I did not behave well; for that cursed villain, his servant, Harding there, did me more harm than all his master could say did me good. He was always at me about what he called the unequal distribution of property; and it was very natural to get from thinking that other folks had no right to their property, to thinking that one should take it from them the best way one could; and so it turned out. I have told all about the robbery in my declaration; but I never could tell, gentlemen, what a turn it gave me, when I found they had murdered the old man. Ay, when first they came down, with their hands all bloody: I shall never forget it, sleeping or waking. However, that I got over, though it was always like a red-hot coal lying at my heart; but then I thought that some time it would go out of my head; till one day I went into a shop in Paris to sell some of the things for them that they had stolen, when they set fire to the lady's house upon the hill, and there I took up an English newspaper, and I saw all about the murder. That was bad enough; but when I found out that a set of rogues and fools had laid the blame of what we had done upon the noblest gentleman in all the country, who would not hurt a fly, if it were not when he is alongside of an enemy;—when I saw that, and thought how it would break his gallant heart, and that of his good father, and poor Miss Blanche's too; and remembered what Captain Delaware had done for me, and what his father and Miss Blanche had done for my poor mother—why, gentlemen, I thought I should have gone mad. Well, I believe I was mad; till, as good luck would have it, I found out Mr. Beauchamp, and told him all about it, and offered, if he would not take odds against the two fellows, but would go with me and face them singly—I offered, I say, to give them up, and myself too. Well, he told me of the king's proclamation, and promise of pardon, and all that; but I told him I would be tried too, like the rest; and away we went, and took them, though I got shot in the shoulder, and Mr. Beauchamp in the face. Now, gentlemen, you all know that I was left behind in Paris, and came over here of my own accord, and gave myself up without any one telling me; and so you may believe the rest of my story or not, as you like. All I want is to clear Captain Delaware; for he is a noble gentleman, and a good officer, and a kind-hearted man—God bless him for ever!"

Harding had been really eloquent; for from the adaptation of his story to the evidence produced immediately before, it was beyond doubt that he had poured forth his long address upon the spur of the occasion. Walter Harrison, however, was not eloquent; and, if there had been anything like eloquence in his speech, it was the eloquence of passionate sincerity. Still his tale produced the deep impression; Harding's alone the transient one. In the case of the latter, the jury and the spectators had felt that the account was plausible, and might be true; but, when Walter Harrison concluded his rough oration, there was not a man in all the court that doubted his assertions. There was a momentary pause, and then more than one person murmured, "Poor fellow!"

At length the judge summed up the evidence, with that clear, straightforward, noble impartiality, that dignified and equitable firmness, which is so universally characteristic of an English judge. He noticed Harding's defence, and gave him the full credit of every probability that existed in favour of the story he had told, but he noticed also the singular conduct of Walter Harrison, pointed out the minute resemblance between the declaration he had made in Paris, and that which he had made in England, and the harmony of the whole of it with both his conduct towards Beauchamp and the conversation he had held with the smuggler. Nevertheless, he said, there was a peculiar feature in the case which greatly affected it, and he begged the jury to give the prisoners the advantage of any doubt that might thence arise in their minds. This peculiar feature was, that Walter Harrison having refused to become king's evidence, the prisoners had not had an opportunity of cross-examining him, as they might have done any other witness. At the same time, his declaration could not fail to have a considerable effect upon the minds of the jury in regard to the other prisoners, as well as to himself, and therefore it was to be received cautiously from the peculiarity adverted to.

The judge's exposition of the law, and his classification of the evidence adduced, was clear, judicious, and impartial; and, on dismissing the jury to deliberate, he called upon them to cast away from their minds the remembrance of everything but what they had heard in that court, and never to forget, that the duty they were then called upon to perform, involved the most awful responsibility which it is possible for a human being to undertake.

The eyes of each of the prisoners were fixed upon the jury-box while the judge addressed the jurors; and it was remarked, that at one particular point of the summing up,

where the declaration of the young sailor, and his conduct throughout the whole transaction, were clearly stated, Harding turned extremely pale, and, casting down his eyes, remained in deep thought.

In a very few minutes the jury re-appeared in court, and the foreman announced their verdict of guilty against Smithson, Harding, and his paramour; not guilty in regard to the young sailor, except on the count referring to the robbery.

As the fatal words rang in her ear, the unhappy woman dropped down on the floor of the dock, as if she had been shot. Smithson alone muttered a few words in his peculiar slang, consigning the judge and jury to the place for which his own deeds qualified him much better. Harding remained profoundly silent, and heard not only the announcement of his condemnation, but the awful sentence that followed it, with calm but steadfast composure.

While sentence of death was passing on Harding, Smithson, and Sarah Ings, the head of a woman, dressed in deep mourning, pale, haggard, and agitated, but with the traces of former beauty shining through all, was seen gazing eagerly upon the judge; till at length he turned to Walter Harrison, and informed him that, at the suggestion of the king's counsel on the occasion, his sentence should be reserved for further consideration. At those words a passionate flood of tears were seen to burst from the poor woman's eyes, which had been dry as the desert before; and she hurried eagerly from the court ere the crowd made their way towards the door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

There are some men so highly gifted with fine and generous feelings, that they feel a sort of sympathetic excitement in the trials and behavour of murderers and highwaymen—prize the rope that hanged a noted criminal, and guard, as a relic, the implement with which some great crime was perpetrated. We own the narrowness of our own mind in these respects, and turn without reluctance for a time from the fierce and ruthless deeds of men in the last stage of human depravity, to scenes where the same passions, and perhaps the same vices, had to struggle with the bonds of education and circumstances, and were restrained to crooked and confined pas-

sages, by all the respects of rank, and station, and a well-preserved name.

On the Saturday morning which succeeded the trial of Harding and his accomplices, the Earl of Ashborough sat waiting for his carriage, which was to be at his door at nine precisely, in order to whirl him and his niece down to one of his country seats, for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays with true old English hospitality, as the newspapers term it, amidst his neighbours and tenants.

About three weeks had now elapsed since the return of his nephew and the dismissal of Mr. Tims, and agents had been appointed by the Earl to examine into that worthy's accounts, in which they had hitherto made but small progress. The noble lord had in the meanwhile pursued his plan of speaking of his ci-devant lawyer, and treating him in every respect with calm and supreme contempt. But Mr. Tims had at the same time proceeded upon his plan also; and scarcely a daily or a weekly newspaper appeared—from that which instructs and bullies the statesman, to that which sets the pothouse in a roar—that did not contain some galling allusion to the Earl of Ashborough and his private affairs.

His lordship took no notice, but still the same attack went on; and though he spoke not a word upon the business to any one, yet it was evident that the annoyance he felt was sufficiently serious to affect his health. A physician's carriage was seen almost daily at his door; and in the end it being discovered that the length of time he had spent that year in the dull and smoky atmosphere of London had hurt his constitution, it was determined that he should set out for the country, and not return till his parliamentary duties absolutely compelled his attendance in the House of Peers. The carriage then was ordered, and his lordship, with his usual punctuality, was ready to the moment. The carriage however, and his lordship's niece, were anything but ready to the moment; and the Earl was sitting in attendance upon their will and pleasure, and in no very quiescent mood, when the loud clatter of a horse's feet beneath the windows broke the silence; and in a moment after, a letter, brought by express from the little county town of ——, was put into his hand, together with another bearing his address in the handwriting of Henry Beauchamp.

The first was signed by the sheriff of the county, and went to inform him that a man of the name of Harding, having been that day, at twenty minutes after three o'clock, condemned to death for the murder at Ryebury, had expressed an earnest wish to see his lordship, and had inti-

mated that, if he were so indulged, he would make disclosures of very great importance, and which, he believed, might even save his own life. These facts the sheriff had thought necessary to bring before his lordship, leaving him to judge whether it would be proper or not to comply with the desire of the prisoner. The letter from Beauchamp contained but a few lines, urging his uncle strongly to give immediate attention to the demand of the felon; and Lord Ashborough, in his first burst of angry impatience, threw both the epistles into the fire together.

As Lord Ashborough was a man who seldom gave way to such unnecessary displays of vehemence, it was very easy to divine, from his violent demolition of the letters, that he would ultimately do what was required, whatever he might say to the contrary; for, had he not intended to go, there would not have been the slightest use of being angry about the matter.

"What could the fellow want with him?" he asked. "It was all nonsense! There could be no reason for his going down; nor could the rascal have any matter of import to relate!"

But the very fact that his lordship could by no means divine what Harding could want with him, served in the greatest degree to strengthen that principle, or passion, or folly—whichever curiosity may be termed by the learned—that now urged the Earl to travel to the town of ——. By the time the carriage came up, he had got as far as to think, "Well, I suppose I must go!" and by the time Miss Beauchamp, be-cloaked and be-furred, entered the drawing-room, he had summoned resolution to say, "Had you and the carriage been ready at the time, Maria, I should have had a pleasant journey with you down to ——.

What convenient things blanks are!

He then explained to his niece the circumstances which called him in a different direction from that which he had proposed to follow, and left her the choice of taking the barouche and the old butler, and proceeding at once into the country, as they had intended at first, or of going with him in the chariot to the county town of ——.

"Oh not I, my dear uncle, for the world!" cried Miss Beauchamp. "You surely do not expect me to go and dance at what they call the 'Size ball! No, indeed; I must be excused. The barouche, the old butler, and the country house for me; but remember, I shall expect your lordship to join me in two days, for the house is to be full of people, the newspapers tell me; and, of course, you cannot expect

me to act the landlady of the inn, when the landlord is away."

His lordship, as a matter of form, scolded his gay niece for her pertness, although he knew her to be incorrigible; and then leaving her to make her own arrangements, which, to say sooth, she had never any great difficulty in doing, he got into the chariot, and rolled away in a very different direction from that in which he had previously intended to turn his steps.

There is nothing so dry and disgusting on earth as travelling on paper. It is a sort of algebraic locomotion, full of false positions and most uninteresting abbreviations; and therefore, instead of posting on by the side of the Earl of Ashborough, we shall take the liberty of getting into the chaise with him, and while he leans back with his eyes half shut, will gently unbutton the two top buttons of his waistcoat, where the lapel folds over the black handkerchief, and, drawing it back, peep in through the window the old Roman wished for, and ascertain what is doing in his lordship's breast.

There was once, in the days of Cheops, an Egyptian who had a remarkably fine poultry-yard, in which were all the fowls of all the feathers that Egypt ever saw. One day it so happened, that, walking by the side of the Nile, the Egyptian espied an egg, which he immediately took up, and putting it in his breast, he carried it home, and laid it carefully in the nest of a sitting hen. Twenty days after, on entering his poultry-yard, to his great surprise he found—nothing but feathers and a young crocodile, which instantly attacked him also. With great difficulty the Egyptian freed himself from the destroyer of his hens; and when he died, he directed, in his will, that, on the frontal bandage of his mummy, there should be written, both in the hieroglyphic and the vulgar character, "Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard!" Cheops, when he heard it, laughed; but one day, when he was going to give way to his revenge, contrary to the best interests both of himself and his people—contrary to wisdom, and policy, and justice, and good faith—he caught himself saying, "Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard!" and ever after that, when he found a violent passion springing up in his breast, his instant address to his own heart was, "Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard!"

The Earl of Ashborough had lately discovered, that in pursuit of his right honourable revenge against Sir Sidney Delaware, he had hatched a crocodile's egg in his poultry-

yard; and though he certainly repented having done so, in exact proportion to the consequent evil it had brought upon himself, he of course felt his hatred towards Sir Sidney Delaware increased in the same degree. Lord Ashborough would not have given his right hand, or anything the least like it, to have had full vengeance on the Delaware family, for he was a man that valued both his hands highly, and would not have parted with either of them; but whereas he would, a month or two before, have given a considerable portion of his golden stores, which were the next things to drops of his blood, he would now have given double the sum to see the ruin of the race he hated. As he lay back, then, in the chariot, he thought over all the events, and could not help hoping that some circumstance might yet give him an opportunity of balancing the long account of those vexations and uncomforts which had fallen upon him, in, with, from, through, and by the affairs of Sir Sidney Delaware, and also of inflicting upon that gentleman and his family evils in a like proportion.

"At all events," he thought—and it was the most consolatory reflection that he had been able to find—"at all events, they have been forced to leave the country, and have most probably gone to America; so that all danger of such a degrading connection being formed by Beauchamp is now at an end. So far, therefore, my labour and anxiety has not been in vain, and I may flatter myself, at least, that one great object has been gained, if not the whole."

There was another slight gleam of hope or expectation, flickering over the dying lamp of the Earl's former designs. If one may use the term, it was a hopeless hope—the stout swimmer's last gasp—yet without it Lord Ashborough would probably never have attended to Harding's request. Hating all the Delaware race as he did, he had not been able to persuade himself fully that Captain Delaware was entirely innocent, notwithstanding the convincing proofs that Beauchamp had laid before him; and he now thought it possible—barely possible—that the murderer Harding might have something to say which would in some way inculpate William Delaware.

All these ideas rolled in the Earl's mind like the morning clouds of spring—misty, and vague, and varying in shape and size, though still keeping one general character—till night came, and he fell asleep.

He awoke about eight o'clock, as the carriage stopped in the county town, and, looking out, saw the bright lamp over the ever-open glass-doors of the principal inn, and the waiters rushing forth to seize upon the inmate of the carriage-and-four. His lordship's agility not being what it had been,

he entered the house of many tenants with slow and dignified steps, and taking possession of the best apartments, demanded whether Mr. Beauchamp was still there. The waiter replied in the affirmative, and in a few minutes the greeting of the uncle and nephew had taken place. As neither had dined, and Beauchamp's dinner was just upon the table, the Earl became his guest, while a servant was despatched to the prison, in order to notify his arrival, in compliance with the request of Harding.

As far as possible, Lord Ashborough never disturbed his appetite in the exercise of its functions by any conversation which might become disagreeable; and, consequently, he abstained, with infinite forbearance, from touching upon the proceedings in regard to the Ryebury affair, till biscuits and wine stood upon the table by themselves. He then, however, asked his nephew how the events of the assizes had gone. Beauchamp, in reply, gave him a succinct account of all that had taken place, without forgetting to mention that the bill against Captain Delaware had been thrown out by the grand jury with every mark of indignant rejection; and, on seeing his uncle bite his lip, he added—"So now, every shade of doubt and suspicion has been removed from the character of William Delaware; and I trust very soon to see him and his family return to England, and resume that station in society for which they were born, and in which your lordship's liberal conduct, in regard to the annuity, will enable them to move with greater ease."

Lord Ashborough turned rather pale; but he replied at once, "I trust not, sir!"

"And pray, why not?" demanded Beauchamp, with more surprise at the frank avowal of such a wish, than at the existence thereof.

"I will tell you, Henry Beauchamp," replied the Earl. "It is on your account that I hope not. I have not chosen to speak to you, since your return, upon your previous conduct towards this family of Delawares, because I trusted that circumstances would have removed them for ever from our neighbourhood; but now that there appears a possibility of their returning, I must tell you that I have never been ignorant, from the first, of your masquerading visit to the country; and I must further say, that a report has reached me of your trifling with the old man's daughter. That you would ever dream of marrying the girl, of course I do not believe; but the very report is unpleasant, and might injure your views in a fitting alliance."

Beauchamp had a great deal of trouble to master the

mixture of personal anger and indignation which his uncle's speech had created in his bosom, and to reduce his reply to terms of respect and moderation. He succeeded, however, in putting out a good deal of the fire ere he answered, "My lord, as far as a kindred interest in my affairs and prospects goes, I feel that your zeal on the present occasion must of course add to the gratitude and affection I entertain towards you, for a long train of kindnesses in the past; but you will pardon me, if I say that a certain line must be drawn between anxiety in regard to my welfare, and dictation in regard to my conduct—for beyond that line I can permit no one to trespass."

Lord Ashborough turned very red, and he replied hastily, "All these are mere fine words, Mr. Beauchamp. What I wish to know simply is, do you, or do you not, intend to marry this girl?"

"That, my lord, is a question," replied Beauchamp, still bridling his anger, "which no man on earth has any right to ask me, and to it I shall give you no reply. But that you may not at all deceive yourself, let me add, that if you desire to know whether I think Miss Delaware fitted by station and circumstances to become my wife, I will reply at once, that a man of much higher rank, and much greater fortune than myself, should think himself honoured could he obtain her hand."

"Enough, sir! Enough!" cried Lord Ashborough. "You have said quite enough. In regard to my right to question you, I slightly differ with you in opinion, inasmuch as my conduct will of course be regulated towards you by the answers you have made; and now, Henry Beauchamp, I have to tell you, that you will do of course as you like; but if these Delawares ever return to England—and may the sea swallow the scheming beggars ere they reach the shore—but if ever they should come, and you pursue your foolish conduct towards that girl, I leave every farthing which I can by any means alienate from the estates attached to the title, to the most distant connection I have, rather than to yourself. Mark me, you throw away at least twenty thousand per annum; and, at the same time, I cast you off for ever, and will never see you more!"

"My lord," replied Beauchamp, in a firm tone, "although you have yet shown me no right to ask the question you did ask, you have at least afforded me a good reason for answering it more pointedly than I have hitherto done; and therefore, that you may make any dispositions in regard to your property which you think fit without delay or uncertainty, I

tell you plainly and positively, that if ever Miss Delaware does return to this country, I shall at once offer her my hand; that if she should not return immediately, I will seek her through every country in Europe for the same purpose! Now, my lord, having said this much, allow me to remind you, that I am not a man whom the loss even of twenty thousand pounds a-year can awe into doing one single thing that he would not otherwise have done, nor leave one regret upon his mind for doing that which he thinks right. The loss of your lordship's affection and society cuts deeper, and will be painful under any circumstances; but I cannot help thinking, that on this point, at least, you will see cause to change your determination."

"Never, sir!" cried Lord Ashborough, whose passion had got into the white stage. "Never, while I live!"—and ringing the bell violently, he threw open the door, and retired to his apartments. Beauchamp took two or three turns up and down the room; told his uncle's servant, who appeared, that he would find him in his own room; and then sat down to contemplate all that had just occurred.

"At all events," he thought, after he had revolved the whole particulars for several minutes—"at all events, it is a very disagreeable business done and over. It must have come sooner or later; and however painful it may be to give such deep offence to a person towards whom I have many debts of gratitude, yet, of course, this was a point upon which I could yield nothing. His lordship, I think, will yield something; and if he relent on the point of excommunication, he may enrich the first chimney-sweeper he meets, for aught I care!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Lord Ashborough's servant found him pale and exhausted for the first energy of anger had passed away, and the languor which it leaves behind had taken possession of a frame already weakened by an organic disease, the attacks of which had lately been more frequent and severe than they had ever proved before.

"Well!" said the Earl, as the man entered—"Have you been to the prison?"

"I sent Johnstone, my lord," replied the valet. "I thought your lordship might want me."

"Well!" cried the Earl, impatiently. "What does Johnstone say?"

"The governor sends his respects, my lord," answered the valet; "and although it is past the hour, he will, of course, admit your lordship, especially as the man has asked several times, he says, whether you had arrived or not."

"Order the carriage!" said the Earl. "But stay—is it far to the prison?"

"Not two hundred yards," replied the servant; and Lord Ashborough declared he would walk thither. The valet, however, took the liberty of remonstrating with that tender interest in his master's health which he thought might add two or three hundred pounds to the legacy he firmly expected to find in the Earl's will. "I hope you will remember, my lord, that you are not well. Sir Henry said you were not to make any great exertion, or take too much exercise; and your lordship is looking very pale to-night."

"I dare say I do," answered the Earl. "However, I must go Give me my cloak, Peregrine; and call Johnstone to show me the way."

The valet, of course, made no further opposition; and Lord Ashborough was soon on his way to the county jail, with a footman lighting him on—for the town was very dark—and with a most fervent wish in his heart that the felon he was going to see might place it in his power to fix at least one damning spot of suspicion on the name of Delaware. The governor of the prison received him with deep respect; and doors opened, and keys turned, for the Earl of Ashborough, throughout the long passages and chilly courts of the county jail.

"We have given this man every convenience in our power," said the governor, as he led Lord Ashborough along towards the condemned cells, "because he seemed to be a person of superior mind; and he assured the sheriff so earnestly, that he had something to communicate to your lordship, which might probably influence his Majesty in regard to his fate, that it was thought indispensable to trouble your lordship on the occasion."

"Pray, has he seen Mr. Beauchamp since his condemnation?" demanded the Earl.

"No, sir! Nor has he expressed any wish to do so," answered the governor; "but the sheriff thought it best to consult that gentleman ere he troubled you. This is the cell, my lord. Here, Nixon, open the door. I will attend your lordship's return in the waiting-room; and the turnkey will be at the door when you wish to come out of the cell. Mr.

Harding," he added, as the door was opened, "here is the Earl of Ashborough kindly come to see you. Stand away from the door, sirs," continued the governor, to two of his satellites, "and leave the prisoner to speak with the Earl at liberty."

The culprit rose as Lord Ashborough entered, looking somewhat annoyed, however, at the noise made by his fetters, as he did so. He was composed and calm as usual; but the hollow eye, and sunken cheek, betrayed the secret of the heart within; and showed that his stoicism—as all stoicism probably ever has been—was all on the surface.

"Your lordship is very kind," he said, in a quiet, tranquil tone, "to attend so promptly to my request."

"The information sent me by the sheriff," replied the Earl, "made me hold it as a duty to come without loss of time. But, let me know, what have you to communicate to me?"

"I have first to make a request, my lord," answered Harding, who knew Lord Ashborough far better than Lord Ashborough knew himself, and therefore counted his expressions in regard to duty, &c., at exactly their true value. "When you have granted or denied my petition, I will tell you what I have further to communicate."

"And pray, what may your petition be?" asked the Earl. "I must not waste time in many words, sir—for it is short."

"No one should know that better than myself, my lord," replied the prisoner; "but my petition is simply, that you would personally apply to his Majesty for my pardon."

The Earl was surprised; but not so much as might have been expected; for he anticipated some discovery which might give the culprit a claim to mercy. "Your request is a most extraordinary one, my good friend," he replied, "considering the evidence which has been brought against you. Nevertheless, I will do as you desire, if you will give me any excuse for doing so. In short, if you are not the real offender, and can point out who is—or if you only participated in the crime which another, more criminal than yourself, led you to, or committed with his own hand—and if you can give me any proof, or can lead in any way to the detection and punishment of the guilty, I shall feel myself justified in pleading strongly in your behalf."

"Sorry I am to say, my lord," answered Harding, coolly, "that I can do none of all these things."

"Then, sir, in the name of everything impudent," exclaimed the Earl, angrily, "how came you to ask of me to plead for you to his Majesty?"

"I think I can show your lordship a strong reason for doing so," replied Harding, with a slight sneer curling his lip; "and I must then leave it to your lordship's ingenuity to discover some motive to assign to his Majesty for granting me his gracious pardon; although, let me remark, that you may well say the case is a very doubtful one; for certain I am, that not one of the twelve jurors who condemned me, did not lie down on his bed last night with a doubting heart, as to my guilt or innocence."

The Earl listened with no slight degree of anger to the prisoner's cool and impudent harangue; but curiosity kept him silent, or at least taught him to conceal his contempt and indignation, till he had heard the circumstances to which the culprit alluded. "Well, sir! well," he said, as Harding paused—"Pray, what are the extraordinary motives which you suppose will prove capable of inducing me to furnish his Majesty with reasons for pardoning a convicted felon? What is there, sir, that should tempt me to undertake such a task?"

"Simply, my lord, that scrupulous care for your lordship's reputation," Harding replied, "which you have displayed through life."

Lord Ashborough laughed aloud; but Harding maintained the same calm and somewhat sneering aspect, as if he had made up his mind to every turn that his conference with the Earl might take, and could not be turned aside from his direct object for a moment, by either scorn or anger.

"And pray, sir," demanded his noble visitor, when he had exhausted his scoffing laugh—"Pray, what has my reputation to do with your situation? Do you intend to accuse me, in your last dying speech and confession, of having committed the murder myself, or of having aided you to commit it?"

"Neither one nor the other, my lord," answered the prisoner; "but if I do make any confession at all, which will depend upon your lordship's conduct, I intend to state that the robbery was first suggested to me by this letter, written to me by your lordship's lawyer on your account, in order to persuade me to delay or carry off a sum of money which my master was to receive through the hands of the old man at Ryebury."

Lord Ashborough turned deadly pale; and taking a step forward, while he advanced his hand towards the paper which Harding held, he exclaimed, "Let me see, sir!"

"Your pardon, my lord!" said the prisoner, drawing back the paper. "One does not usually give such valuable docu-

ments out of one's own hand. I will read it to you, however;" and in a calm, sustained voice, he proceeded to treat the ears of Lord Ashborough, sentence by sentence, with the whole of that letter which had been formerly written to him by Mr. Peter Tims, in regard to the money which Beauchamp had expected from London, to pay off the annuity on Sir Sidney Delaware's estate. "Your lordship will see," continued the prisoner, "that such a letter was very well calculated to induce me to commit a robbery; you will see, also, that Mr. Tims uses your lordship as his authority throughout; and I look upon myself as extremely lucky in having always preserved this letter in the lining of my waistcoat, as it now gives me the hope that so highly respected and honourable a nobleman as yourself may interest himself in my favour."

Now, in Lord Ashborough's mind there was a great portion of that very same principle which had led Beauchamp to make the most uncompromising declaration of his purposes towards Blanche Delaware, as soon as he found that his uncle held out a threat upon the subject. Or, as the matter would be explained in one word by the phrenologists—who, if they have discovered nothing else, have, at least, by the clearness of their definitions and their classification of human passions, rendered great services to moral philosophy — Lord Ashborough had no small development of combativeness in his brain; and the very idea of being bullied by a felon into demanding the royal mercy for a murderer, without one plausible motive to allege, instantly armed him to resist, though at the same time he felt terribly the additional wound his character might receive from such a paper being published as that which Harding had read.

"You are mistaken, sir," he replied, sternly. "You are entirely mistaken in your anticipations. That letter was totally unauthorised by me; and the rascal who wrote it, for that and several similar acts, has been dismissed from my employment."

Harding heard him with the same cool smile, and then replied, "Your lordship's memory is short, I know; but luckily I can refresh it, for Mr. Tims has favoured me only last night with this authentic and original copy of the letter, containing numerous corrections and improvements in your lordship's own handwriting."

Lord Ashborough saw that the day was lost, and that his discarded agent had triumphed. He had not committed himself in regard to the Delawares, it is true; but he had committed himself hopelessly in regard to the very man who now stood before him a convicted felon; and he felt that the

reputation, of which he was proud just in proportion as he little deserved it, was gone for ever. He made no reply, however; but with a slight, and, as Harding fancied, scornful movement of the lip, he turned suddenly towards the door, struck it sharply with his hand, and exclaimed, "Open the door, turnkey! Open the door!"

It was instantly thrown wide to give him exit—but Lord Ashborough never went out! The one word, "Villain!" was all that he pronounced in the hearing of the turnkey; and he then fell forward at once, across the threshold of the door.

All was now confusion. Both jailers started forward to raise the nobleman, whom they believed to have tripped his foot in the doorway. Harding gave one longing look towards the open door and the embarrassed turnkeys; but then, turning his eyes to the fetters upon his own limbs, he sat down with a sigh of infinite compassion for himself, while the Earl was raised, and the door locked.

"He has fainted, Mr. Jones!" said one of the jailers. "Here, take his feet, and help me to carry him along to the waiting-room."

"He looks deadly pale!" replied the other, stooping forward, and gazing in Lord Ashborough's face, while he aided to bear the Earl onward through the passage. "He looks mighty like a dead man."

The consternation of the governor of the prison was excessive when he saw the state of the noble visitor; and, while physicians were sent for from every quarter, he himself pressed his hand upon the Earl's wrist, and upon his heart; but no pulse made itself felt in return; and all the usual restoratives were applied in vain.

A moment or two after the surgeon of the prison appeared; but as soon as he beheld the countenance of him to whose aid he was called, he shook his head, declaring that he believed him to be dead. He attempted to bleed him, however; but by this time no blood was to be obtained, and two or three medical men, from different parts of the town, arriving soon after, confirmed the opinion of the first. Nevertheless, various means were still resorted to in the hope of restoring animation, while messengers were dispatched to the different inns to ascertain at which the Earl had alighted, and to inform his relations and servants of what had occurred.

Henry Beauchamp was still musing over the fire when Lord Ashborough's valet opened the door, and, with a face of grief and terror, extremely well compounded, exclaimed, "Sir, I am sorry to tell you that my lord has been taken very ill at the prison——"

Beauchamp started up, and took his hat, while the servant added, "Indeed they seem to fear, sir, that he is dead!"

"Good God!" cried Beauchamp, as he rushed past the man—"Good God!" and, darting down stairs, he proceeded with rapid steps to the prison, into which, on giving his name, he was instantly admitted.

He found what had been Lord Ashborough extended on a table with a pillow under his head, and the surgeons still busy about the body; but one glance at his uncle's countenance showed him that the spirit had fled; and for a moment he gazed upon him without question or remark, while busy Memory did her work, and gathered from the past every kind act of the dead, to build him up a monument in his nephew's heart.

"How did this happen, sir?" demanded Beauchamp at length, in a low tone, as if afraid of disturbing that deep sleep that had fallen upon his uncle.

The governor told all he knew, and Beauchamp anxiously requested that the prisoner, Harding, might be asked if he could assign any cause for the accident that had befallen the Earl. One of the turnkeys was accordingly sent to his cell; and while he was absent, Beauchamp, perceiving that the medical men were addressing all their means of restoration to the head, informed them that Lord Ashborough had been for some years subject to spasms of the heart.

"If that be the case, then, sir," replied one of them, "we may abandon the attempt, as the Earl is certainly dead."

"Nevertheless," replied Beauchamp, "leave no means untried, while there is even the most remote hope."

The surgeon shook his head, but still made some more efforts; and the turnkey, returning almost immediately from the condemned cell, reported that the prisoner could only be brought to say, that the Earl had fallen into a violent passion, and that he himself desired not to be further troubled upon the subject."

After a pause of a few minutes more, the principal surgeon again addressed Beauchamp, saying, "As I imagine, sir, from your manner, that you are a near relation of the Earl, I feel it my duty to tell you positively that he is no more; and that to continue all these efforts in your presence, would be but to harrow up your feelings for no purpose. All men must die, and this nobleman will never have to endure that pang again."

Beauchamp bowed his head, and, crossing his arms upon his bosom, remained for a few moments in silence. Then begging that one of the younger surgeons would remain with

the body all night, and that the elder person who had addressed him would accompany him to the inn, he added a few words of course to the governor of the prison, and departed from the chamber of the dead.

CHAPTER XL.

We generally, through life, write the actions of each of our friends and acquaintances on the two sides of one leaf in the book of memory, the good upon one side, and the bad upon the other, so that it is scarcely possible to see both at once. With an amiable weakness, however, man most frequently suffers the death of any one he has known to turn the leaf for ever, and reads the character of him that is no more as if the good were alone recorded. Beauchamp's heart would not suffer him to do otherwise; and, after he had spoken with the surgeon in regard to several points of all the sad ceremonies that were to follow, he sat down in solitude, giving way to feelings that were far more bitter than he had anticipated. Even had he not felt his uncle's loss deeply, on the ground of personal regard, there was in his bosom another motive for regret which would have pained him much.

He asked himself whether the angry discussion which had taken place between himself and the Earl, so shortly before the decease of the latter, might not have hastened that catastrophe; and although he was obliged to acknowledge that, were the same circumstances to come over again, he could not, and would not, act otherwise than he had done, yet he was deeply grieved that the disagreement should have taken place so immediately previous to the death of his uncle, and that they had parted from each other for ever in anger and ill-will.

We pass over Beauchamp's grief, however, merely saying that he grieved sincerely. Nor shall we dwell upon the details of the funeral of the Earl of Ashborough—nor treat the reader to the full, true, and particular account of the execution of three criminals, against whom we have seen that a jury of their countrymen pronounced a just verdict, and to whom a judge had awarded a righteous punishment. Suffice it, that they died!

In regard to Harding alone, a few words must be said. To all appearance, he met his fate with the same determined coolness which he had shown through life; rendered, per-

haps, a degree more stern and intense from the awful situation in which he was placed. One circumstance, and one circumstance alone, seemed to show that the drop of better feeling which almost every man has at the bottom of his heart was not entirely polluted by the poisonous streams that flowed around it. On the night before his execution, after having obdurately rejected those religious consolations which were offered with persevering piety by several zealous clergymen, he suddenly desired to speak with two magistrates; and then, in their presence, made a full and clear confession of all the particulars connected with the murder at Ryebury, confirming in every point the testimony of Walter Harrison. This he signed in the presence of the magistrates, and caused them to affix their names as witnesses; which being done, he added, "I have made this confession, gentlemen, because the act for which I am to die has been attributed to a young gentleman who had nothing to do with it; and because—that gentleman, being well calculated to do service to himself and his country, if every shade of imputation be removed from his character—I think the general considerations of utility require—or rather," he said, breaking off abruptly the tirade in which he was about to indulge—"or rather, I do it because I have learned what mental as well as bodily suffering is, and therefore would spare it to another where there is no occasion for its infliction. So now, gentlemen, I have done with this world for ever, and I wish you good night."

In the various accounts of the execution, which every one must have seen in the newspapers, a number of contradictory statements appeared; some journals affirming that Harding had died, maintaining his innocence to the last; some, with more truth, that he had made a full confession. His statement, however, was immediately sent up to London, properly authenticated, together with the case of Walter Harrison, and both were laid before the Home Secretary for the consideration of his Majesty. The necessary measures for issuing a free pardon to the young sailor were immediately taken; and when it was presented for signature, the great personage paused for a moment, to ask some questions in regard to Captain Delaware, expressing considerable indignation that so grave a charge should have been brought against a distinguished officer on such light grounds. "Had that officer not run off," he said—"a point of which it may be as well to take no notice—had he not run off, it might have been necessary to make him some compensation. But that was a great error—that was a great error, to flinch from trial—a brave man, too—a very brave man!"

"Sir A—— B——, the judge who presided at the trial, sire," replied the Secretary, "informs me, that it was lucky he did make his escape, alleging that he would have been hanged to a certainty, before evidence of his innocence could have been procured. So that your Majesty has, at all events, saved a good officer."

"Always a great gain, sir," replied the personage whom he addressed; "and if that was the case, Captain Delaware did very right. Always stay in the ship till the last moment; but don't go down with her, if you can help it."

With these observations the pardon was signed, and dispatched to the country town where the young sailor was still confined. Being set at liberty, he immediately took his way on foot towards the village of Emberton, where so many of our scenes have been laid. It was by this time winter, and a hard frost rendered the road firm and dry, so that Walter Harrison, though greatly debilitated, walked on, better than might have been expected. Night, however, had fallen ere he reached Emberton; and glad he was that darkness hid him from the cold and abhorrent eyes he must otherwise have encountered in the streets. But what tongue could tell the many painful and thrilling memories that were awakened in his bosom by every spot, as he passed through his native town, and saw again all the scenes of youth and innocence—as he marked the various resorts of his boyish hours, and felt that a night, far darker than that through which he wandered, had fallen over his life for ever!

At the door of his mother's cottage garden he paused, and gazed wistfully over the house, with feelings that would scarcely let him enter the gate. There was a light, however, within; and his step over the gravel of the footpath had instantly caught the mother's unerring ear—the light moved—the door was thrown open—and the worn and weary lad, weighed down with sin, and sickness, and sorrow, was pressed in his mother's arms, and his cold cheek bathed in her tears!

It was long ere either could speak, and for nearly half an hour the young sailor sat gazing upon the fire, while thick recollections of all the past held him dull and voiceless. All the time his mother stood by his side, and fixed her eyes upon him, tracing every line that remorse had written, and every hue that sickness had spread over his face; but at length she laid her hand upon his arm, and said, "Walter, my beloved boy, we must go hence. You must not stay in this hateful place, which has seen our ruin, our poverty, and our shame. We must go across the sea, and I will lead you to a place that you will like to see."

"You forget, mother! You forget!" said the youth, with a deep sigh; "people travel not without money; neither can they live without it in foreign countries more than here. I am sure you do not think that I am going to take the reward the people offered me, for giving up the murderers—No, no! I will not take a price for their blood!"

"I would not have you, Walter!" cried his mother, eagerly. "I would not have you touch it with the tip of a finger, if they offered you a world of gold on such an account. But fear not, my boy, I have the means. Look here—what I received but yesterday—two hundred golden sovereigns and this kind letter; and this deed of annuity to you and me, for one hundred pounds a-year as long as either of us live, charged upon the estates of Mr. Henry Beauchamp."

"God bless him!" said the youth, fervently. "God bless him!"

"God will bless him, my boy!" replied the widow; "and make him happy, I am sure; for if ever there was a friend to the friendless, it is Mr. Beauchamp. Only three days after the trial he sent me this;" and she put into her son's hands a letter, in which Henry Beauchamp explained to her that the young sailor, having been severely wounded in turning away a pistol which had been directed towards his head, he was not only bound but pleased to make him a return, which would place him above temptation from poverty.

Beauchamp, who hated that any one should feel he was conferring an obligation upon them, added many a reason to show that he was rather pleasing himself than loading them with benefits; and, as he read, the young sailor shook his head with the first smile that had curled his lip for many weeks. "Ay!" he said, "he is a noble gentleman as ever lived; but he need not have said so much to make us take the money, mother; for if there is anybody in the world I could be proud to take it from, it is from Mr. Beauchamp; and I declare, mother, if I get over it all, I will try all my life long to do nothing but what is right—just to show him that I am grateful."

"It is far the best way that you can show it, Wat," replied his mother; "and oh, my boy, it is the only way that ever you can set your mother's heart at peace again!"

"Well, I will, mother! I will!" cried the lad, grasping her hand; "and I am sure that Heaven will help me if I try—for since I have had this wound through my side, I have not felt half so wild and wilful as I used to do; and when I was in the prison of a night, I tried to pray many a time—and if it had not been for that, I don't think I should have

got through the whole of that bad business steadily. So, I will try and do right; indeed I will!"

The tears streamed down his mother's cheeks; for the relief that Beauchamp's liberality had given her was nothing to that which those words afforded, and the night passed over in peace. The next morning the news spread through Emberton that the widow's son had returned; and one or two of the ladies of that place, suddenly smitten with an interest in the widow's fate, called at the cottage they had never entered before, just to ask after her and her son. They carried no gossip back into the town with them, however; for the widow coldly, though civilly, replied that her son was not well, and dismissed them with a brief answer to more impertinent questions. Three days after that again, the fresh tidings fluttered on the air of Emberton, that Widow Harrison and her son had left the place, and had gone to France. Every one opened their eyes—every one conjectured—and then the nine days' wonder was over, and the whole affair was forgotten.

Only one person in the neighbourhood saw the young sailor after his return. This was Dr. Wilton, who, having delivered in person the packet which Beauchamp had sent to the widow, was now visited by both herself and her son, ere their departure, with a request that he would convey to their benefactor the expression of their deepest gratitude. The worthy clergyman, on first hearing who it was that awaited him in his library, had meditated an exhortation to the young sailor on his future conduct; but when he saw the worn and haggard look, and the evident traces of ruined health which his countenance displayed—all that was severe in the good man's oration died away, and it breathed nothing but hope and consolation.

"You say you are going to France," he added; "and I will give you two books to take with you, which, after your Bible, I should wish you to read attentively. They contain neither cant nor affectation," he added; "but they point out the best way for one who has been led astray to return unto right."

Both mother and son received the books with gratitude, and after having promised to let him know where they settled in France, they left the worthy clergyman in the act of muttering to himself, "He'll not live three months, poor, unhappy lad!—There is consumption in his eyes and on his cheek!"

Scarcely were they gone, and scarcely was Dr. Wilton's comment upon the young sailor's appearance pronounced, when the rush of wheels was heard before his windows,

and in a moment the servant announced Lord Ashborough. The doctor started up, bewildered; but as Beauchamp entered the room, dressed in deep mourning, the events that had lately taken place recurred to his old preceptor's mind; and shaking him by the hand, he exclaimed, "Welcome, my dear Harry, and let me pay my tribute to your new rank; though, to tell you the truth, when the servant announced the Earl of Ashborough, I scarcely knew who to expect. I had forgotten all about it, and have been calling you Mr. Beauchamp for this half hour, with two pensioners of yours—Widow Harrison and her son. But with me, I am afraid you will be Harry Beauchamp to the end of your days."

"Let me never be anything else, I beseech you, my dear sir," replied Beauchamp. "The poor widow and her son, too, know me by no other name; for the deed was drawn up before my poor uncle's death. But I must go and see them when I visit Emberton."

"You will hardly find them there," replied Dr. Wilton; "for apprehensions of the rude curiosity and brutal scorn of that most gossiping place has driven them to seek an asylum on the Continent. But tell me, Harry, what is the meaning of your looking so ill and so anxious?"

"In regard to my ill looks," answered Beauchamp, smiling, "you must remember, my dear sir, that, as I wrote to you, I have been seriously indisposed since we last met; and as to my anxious looks, I have certainly had many a subject, both of care and anxiety, pressing heavily upon my mind. The sudden death of my uncle, and all the consequent trouble—both in examining his affairs, and in punishing a rascally agent, who endeavoured to throw the basest imputations upon the memory of his benefactor—have occupied more of my time and attention than was at all pleasant to me."

"I hope at least you have succeeded in doing justice upon the agent," replied Dr. Wilton; "I have seen something of the affair in the newspapers."

"I have not punished Mr. Tims quite so well as I could have wished," Beauchamp answered, "though he thinks the retribution more than severe. The fact is, I am afraid my uncle suffered him to make use of his name with too great freedom, and the lawyer has of course taken advantage of it to screen himself at his patron's expense. Nevertheless, I compelled him to refund everything that he had unjustly appropriated; but, although I believe we had proof sufficient of one or two direct frauds to have had his name struck off the roll of attorneys with disgrace, and perhaps might have punished him still further, I have been obliged to compromise

that matter, and suffer him to make his retirement from business a voluntary act."

A slight glow upon Henry Beauchamp's cheek showed Dr. Wilton plainly that there had been parts in the conduct of the late Earl of Ashborough which his nephew did not feel to have been quite justifiable; and therefore, turning the conversation from a topic which he saw was disagreeable in some of its details, he answered, "That the man was a rogue in grain I have never had any doubt since all the business relating to the murder of his unhappy uncle, and the charge he preferred against poor William Delaware. But pray, Harry, can you tell me what has become of Sir Sidney and his family—you of course know?"

"Indeed, my dear sir, I do not," answered Beauchamp; "and one great reason of my coming down here was to ask you the very question that you have asked me. I have caused my solicitor in London to apply to the trustee of Captain and Miss Delaware, to ascertain their present residence. He replied, however, that he was as ignorant upon the subject as any one. The ten thousand pounds that they inherited from their mother, he had sold out, he said, at a moment's notice, and transmitted to Sir Sidney at Mrs. Darlington's, since which time he had heard nothing of their movements."

"Strange enough!" replied Dr. Wilton; "but we must make inquiries in the neighbourhood while you stay with me; and of course we shall find some one who knows their address—some of the farmers, or Mr. Johnstone, who used to collect Sir Sidney's rents, or some one."

"I am afraid it will be a more difficult matter than you anticipate," replied Beauchamp; "I sought them in vain when I was in France, though I knew that they must have landed at Cherbourg; but I found that, as they had undoubtedly gone to join William Delaware himself, their route had been studiously concealed. Several weeks have now elapsed since the trial; and yet, though Captain Delaware's character stands as clear as ever it did, we have heard nothing of him."

Dr. Wilton did not now require to be told what was the chief cause of that expression of anxiety which he had remarked in Beauchamp's countenance; but he knew that to a lover, and an ardent one—which he felt sure his pupil would be wherever he did love—the subject of his hopes and fears could never become painful or tiresome when once it had been spoken of; and he therefore went on boldly to ask, whether Beauchamp had or had not discovered since, that he was right in thinking that Blanche's conduct, in rejecting his hand, had proceeded from some misapprehension.

"No, indeed, my dear sir!" replied Beauchamp. "As I

told you at the time, there could be no misapprehension in the business. Nor have I discovered anything since, on any subject which would lead me to think so. Indeed, I have but had the pleasure of meeting Miss Delaware once since I last saw you."

"Ah! if you speak of her in such set and formal terms, poor girl," cried the clergyman, with a gay smile, "I shall think that your lordship's new dignity has changed your views in regard to such an alliance. Is it so, my noble lord?"

Beauchamp laughed, but faintly. "No, no!" he replied. "My views are the same. All I can hope is, that the new dignity you speak of may change hers—and yet," he added, "that would make it all worthless together."

"Take care, Harry! Take care!" cried Dr. Wilton, with a warning shake of the head—"Many a man has frittered away his happiness with just such sentences as that. But I will ensure you, that your title will make no difference in the views of Blanche Delaware; so that, if you have no other recommendation than that, you may give yourself up to despair. But you young men are so impatient. Here you are fretting yourself to death, because you do not discover the residence of your ladye-love as soon as you think fit to seek it."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you are quite mistaken," answered Beauchamp. "My chief desire is to see William Delaware and his father; and—showing them that every difficulty which surrounded them in life is now removed—to share in the happiness that such a change must occasion them—that is all, indeed!"

"Poo! my dear Harry! Nonsense!" cried his old preceptor. "I never saw a man yet who could cheat his own understanding so completely as you sometimes do. You are just as anxious to see Blanche Delaware as ever man was to see the woman he loved best in the world. But we will find her, my dear boy! We will find her."

Their search, however, in the neighbourhood of Emberton, proved entirely in vain. Neither agent nor farmers knew anything of the track of Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware; and, at the end of a week, Beauchamp's last hope was reduced to the information possessed by Mrs. Darlington.

CHAPTER XLI.

"MARIA!" said the Earl of Ashborough, addressing Miss Beauchamp on the morning after his return from Emberton,

"what say you, dear sister, to a tour on the Continent for six months or a year?"

"Why, personally, I should have no objection, Henry," answered Miss Beauchamp; "but you forget, my dear brother, there are nine very respectable gentlemen, young and old, expiring for me at this present moment. Now, what would they do if I were to go abroad?"

"Expire for somebody else, I suppose," replied Beauchamp; "I cannot perceive any other event."

"Henry! Henry!" cried his sister, "you are perfectly insulting. But to tell you the truth, I think it is the best thing you can do, to travel to the south; for during the past month you have looked so like a gambler, or a member of the Lower House, or some of those people that sit up all night, and come home pale and thin in the morning, that I am ashamed to be seen with you. But seriously, I will go where you like, noble brother," she added, leaning her two hands half affectionately, half maliciously, on Beauchamp's arm, and looking up in his face; "I will go where you like, and help you to search for sweet Blanche Delaware, with all my eyes."

Beauchamp smiled, much less annoyed than his sister had expected; but gliding his arm round her waist he held her tight, while he answered, "Will you, indeed, Maria? Well, then, as a reward for your disinterested kindness, I trust you may find William Delaware with his sister."

Maria Beauchamp turned as red as an infantry regiment, and struggling away from her brother's grasp, ran into her own room, where, strange to say, she wept like a child. But Beauchamp, by his retort, had, at all events, ensured that not one teasing word upon the subject of Blanche Delaware should pass his sister's lips; and as soon as he could arrange his affairs—which of course kept him three weeks longer than he had expected—with two carriages, as little baggage, and as few servants as his sister would suffer him to take, he was once more rolling away towards Dover.

Following the invariable rule of looking in, instead of looking out, we shall much prefer giving a sketch of what was passing in the heart of Henry Beauchamp, Earl of Ashborough, to depicting the beauties of the Canterbury road, or expatiating on the sublimities of Rochester and Chatham.

As Dr. Wilton had imagined, Beauchamp certainly was as impatient as human being could be, to see Blanche Delaware, and to make one more effort for happiness; but there were many points in Beauchamp's situation, and many feelings at Beauchamp's heart, which the good rector had not taken at all into account. Ever since he had parted with

Blanche at the Prior's Fountain, he had been placed in the painful circumstances of a rejected lover, while just a sufficient degree of hope had been left to keep love alive, to render the feeling of disappointment perpetual, and to aggravate its bitterness by doubt. In seeking her he loved, therefore, he knew not what he was to expect; but as he was not one to be satisfied with anything less than love for love, he determined that he would not suffer his exertions in favour of William Delaware to be urged as any tie upon Miss Delaware's affection; but that he would have the clearest assurance that the heart was his, before he again asked the hand, which, in his eyes, would be worthless without it. He felt, indeed, that it would be difficult to press Blanche upon the subject of her former rejection of his suit, and yet he perversely determined that the rejection ought to be explained before the suit could be renewed. These thoughts, however, and the many contending emotions with which they were connected, both agitated and depressed him; and the hopes which his short interview with Blanche at the inn, as well as several previous considerations, had excited, waxed weak and faint as he crossed the Channel and found he was approaching nearer to her dwelling.

In Paris, however, he was destined to meet another disappointment—slight, indeed, but calculated to increase the impatience that was growing upon him. He found, on inquiring at Mrs. Darlington's hotel, that she had left the French metropolis two days before for Italy; and, as the people of the house informed him that her departure had been somewhat sudden, he immediately settled it in his own mind that she had heard some tidings of the Delawares, and had proceeded at once to join them. Now, although when Beauchamp came to reflect upon this supposition, he found that it did not very well agree with the indifferent, comfort-loving, bonnet-and-cap sort of character of Mrs. Darlington, yet it was a favourite fancy, and he did not choose to give it up. He therefore intimated his wish that his sister would agree to pursue their way towards Italy without delay; and Miss Beauchamp—although she was really fatigued with a long journey over a road that can never have been mended since the days of Klovigh, as Chateaubriand calls the French king—acquiesced at once without further question. She did it so sweetly and good humouredly, too, that it opened her brother's heart at once; and, sitting down beside her, he told her all his motives, and all his wishes, and all his hopes, in a way that defied her taking advantage of him even by a smile. In return, he gained a world of good advice, which,

as it came from a woman, and related to a woman, Beauchamp wisely treasured up for service.

With scarcely a day's interval, the whole party were once more upon the road; but as the way or ways from Paris to Geneva are each and all as well beaten by English travellers as that between London and Dover, we shall not pause to itinerarize even here. At only one small town on the road shall we take the liberty of stopping, inasmuch as an accidental circumstance induced Beauchamp to stay there longer than he had at first proposed. He had chosen the road by Dijon instead of that by Macon; and, after sleeping at Dole, set out early in the morning, in hopes of reaching Geneva that night. The first stage from Dole, if we remember right, is Mont sous Vaudrey. At all events, if it be not the first it is the second; and perhaps the reader and the guide-book will excuse us if we mistake. Here, however, Beauchamp changed horses at about half-past ten, and thence rattled on through that neat little village, entered a part of the forest of Rahon, and then, after winding on up and down the wavy hills at the foot of the Jura, reached the small village of Aumont, at the distance of about five or six miles from the relay. Without stopping there, however, the postilion trotted on, and, driving through the Crozanne, paused for a moment to let his horses pant, while Beauchamp and his sister gazed out upon a wide and very beautiful scene of hill and valley, lighted up by the soft sunshine of spring, with an occasional wreath of morning mist hanging upon the brows of the mountains.

"What town is that?" demanded Beauchamp, speaking out of the window to the postilion—"there—before you—a little to the left, leaning its back against the hills, with two or three neat chateaux scattered on the slope?"

"C'est Poligny, Monsieur!" replied the postilion; and, adding that they changed horses there, rode on.

As they approached the little town, the country became richly cultivated in vines and corn; and the aspect of the whole scene, backed by mountains and sparkling with a thousand streams, was gay and engaging.

"What a beautiful spot!" cried Miss Beauchamp. "I really think, Henry, when you marry, and turn me out of your house to die an old maid, I will buy yon grey chateau on the hill—looking something between a village church and a farm-house—and spend the rest of my days at Poligny."

"See it first on a rainy day, Maria!" replied her brother, whose increasing anxiety and impatience did not afford the brightest medium through which to view the world.

"Out, cynic!" cried his sister; "I will never see things on a rainy day when I can see them on a fine one; and now, tell me, whither are you going to whirl me at this violent rate? What particular spot of the earth's surface is the ultimate object of this journey, my lord? Or are we to go on rolling for ever?"

"Why, I think, my dear sister," replied Beauchamp, musing; "I think it is not unlikely to end in Sicily—I have some reason to imagine——"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Miss Beauchamp, interrupting him, "that must surely be an English woman in the widow's dress."

"Hai, postillon! Arrettez! Arrettez donc!" was all the young Earl's reply to his sister's observation; and the next moment, much to her surprise, he was out of the carriage, and speaking kindly to the woman whom she had noticed, and who had turned round to take a casual glance of the two gay carriages that came dashing up into the little quiet town of Poligny.

"Indeed! Is he so ill?" said Beauchamp, gravely, as he listened to widow Harrison's account of the journey she had lately taken, and her son's present situation. "I am really sorry to hear it—But you cannot have good medical advice here. It would be much better to get him on to Geneva."

"Oh, but indeed we have very good advice, sir!" answered the widow. "There is good Dr. Arnoux here, who was in England in the time of the war—an emigrant—and lodged for three years in our house in Emberton before our misfortunes. I have just been getting Walter's medicines while he is asleep."

"Well, Mrs. Harrison," replied Beauchamp, whose natural kindness of heart was not to be mastered even by impatience. "I will stay here at the inn to-day; and whenever you think that your son is likely to be awake, I will come down and see him. But you must point me out the house."

The poor woman replied that the young sailor was generally more drowsy in the morning, and seemed much better and more lively in the evening; and, with many unobtrusive but heartfelt thanks, she described to Beauchamp the way to her dwelling.

"Well, then, I will come down in the evening," answered Beauchamp, "and we will see whether we cannot devise some plan that may improve his health."

With this promise, he returned to the carriage; and, while it drove on to the auberge, satisfied his sister's curiosity in regard to the poor widow. "So now, Maria," he said,

"you will have the day's rest you have been sighing for so long."

"Granted out of compassion to the widow," cried his sister; "but not out of pity for me, though my whole frame has been aching for the last three days, and my maid was very nearly expiring at Dole."

Notwithstanding this complaint, Miss Beauchamp, after luncheon, showed herself quite willing to accompany her brother on an expedition in a char-à-banc of the country, amongst the neighbouring hills; and as they descended the stairs of the auberge to enter their little vehicle, they heard another female tongue asking one of the servants, in provincial English, who was the owner of the two splendid carriages that stood before the house? The young Earl smiled as he listened to his title, given with vast pomposity by his courier, remarking to his sister, that if his new rank was of no great use to himself, it was at least of some service to his servants. By the time they had reached the door, however, both the inquirer and respondent had made themselves invisible; and getting into the char-à-banc without any other attendance than the driver, the Earl and his sister proceeded on their expedition. Of it we shall say nothing, but refer our readers to the indispensable Mrs. Marianna Starke. On their return, however, they found their dinner prepared; and after somewhat hastily concluding that meal, Beauchamp said he would leave his sister, and walk down to the widow's cottage. But Miss Beauchamp, whose heart was not always as light as it seemed, declared that she would accompany him, protesting that men were worth nothing upon a charitable errand.

It was a sweet bright evening in the end of March, with the sky, through which the sun was dipping down towards his rest, so rich and warm, that one might have taken it for the beginning of October, had it not been for the almanack, and for the tender green of the trees, and the flood of untaught melody that came pouring from every bush. The road led down to where there are two or three scattered houses of a better class—which they call 'les maisons bourgeois'—built upon the slope of a little dell at the back of the town, between it and the rise of the mountains. In one of these, with the face looking through the valley of the Glantine to the open country beyond, was the house now occupied by the widow. It was easily found, and Beauchamp and his sister paused ere they entered, to gaze for a moment on the rich view, lying calm and purple under the evening sky, while the dark masses of hill on the other hand—rising up from a base of mingled wood and pasture, with the small

château that Miss Beauchamp had so much admired, breaking the line of the trees—towered up in solemn majesty above the whole.

The door was open, and Beauchamp entering first, proceeded into one of the rooms, where he heard some one speaking. The widow and her son were sitting together near the window, and both rose (though the latter moved with difficulty) to receive their benefactor.

"Here is my sister come to see you, Mrs. Harrison," he said, as he entered. "Sit down, Walter. I am sorry to hear that the journey has made you so ill, my poor fellow;" and taking a seat opposite to him—while Miss Beauchamp beckoned Mrs. Harrison out to the door, in order to leave her brother's conversation more at liberty—he gazed upon the sunk but hectic cheek of the young sailor, and the dazzling brightness of his feverish eye.

"It was not the journey, sir," replied the young man, with a shake of the head, mournful, but not discontented—"it was not the journey;" and then, looking round to see that his mother was not there, he added—"I told you, sir, it would not last long, and I thank God for it! for I have never forgiven myself—and every hour that I linger on is a reproach to my heart. So now that I know mother will be cared for, and that I have shown my gratitude to you and to the Captain, God bless him!—and that I have learned to think better than I used—I don't care how soon it comes to an end. But, sir," he continued, quickly, as if he had forgotten to do so before, "I ought to thank you deeply for all your kindness; and especially, I am sure, for taking the trouble to come and see me to-night, when there are so many things you must have to do and talk about."

The young man's eyes gazed vacantly out upon the prospect as he spoke. "He wanders!" thought Beauchamp. "I have heard physicians say that it is the sign of approaching death with consumptive people."

"Oh no!" he added, aloud; "I have but little business of any kind to do; and, indeed, I should have been here before, but your mother said you were sleeping."

'I sleep more in the day than at night," replied the young man; "the cough keeps me awake. But I hope, Mr. Beauchamp," he continued, in the same abrupt manner—"I hope you will forgive me everything I ever did or said amiss to you. Indeed, I am very sorry for every wrong thing that I have done through life—and hope God will fogive me!"

"Your offences towards me," answered Beauchamp, "if there have been any, which I do not know, are easily forgiven

and in the Almighty we are sure of a more merciful judge than man can be. Mrs. Harrison," he said, wishing to change the subject, and hearing the door behind him open, "I should wish much to see this Dr. Arnoux whom you mentioned to me. Where does he live?"

As Beauchamp spoke, he turned round slowly in his chair, in order to address the widow; but the words had scarcely passed his lips, when he started up. Looking in at the door, indeed, was the figure of his sister, with the poor widow behind her; but between him and them were two other figures—and darting forward, with all his doubts, and apprehensions, and resolutions swallowed up in joy, Beauchamp clasped the hand of Blanche Delaware in his own, while his left was pressed almost as warmly by Captain Delaware.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Blanche! William! Is it possible!"

"Yes, yes, indeed!" replied Captain Delaware. "Beauchamp, our friend, our benefactor, our guardian angel I may call you, we have met again, at length!"

Blanche Delaware said not a word; and though her eyes sparkled with joy that would not be kept down, and her cheek glowed like crimson at the joy her eyes betrayed, she trembled like an aspen in the wind, and, sinking into a seat, a few sweet, happy tears rolled over her fair face.

"Well," said Miss Beauchamp, advancing from the door, "I must acknowledge that this is hardly fair—that I, who drew Mrs. Harrison out of the way when I heard who was coming, in order that this merry meeting should have none of its surprise anticipated, can find no one to welcome me! Blanche Delaware, my dear cousin," she added, taking Blanche's hand, and kissing her as a sister, "how have you been this many a-day? We have not met since we were no higher than that stool; but I have learned to love you, nevertheless. Have you quite forgotten Maria Beauchamp?"

Blanche wept outright.

"What, then, Mr. Beauchamp, have you not seen Sir Sidney?" asked the widow's son, almost at the same moment. "It was very kind indeed of you to come and see me first."

As he spoke, a violent fit of coughing seized him; and Beauchamp, seeing that the excitement of all that was passing around was too much for him, proposed to depart at once, telling him that he would come early the next day, after having seen the physician. Miss Beauchamp, holding Blanche's hand kindly in her own, led her towards the door

of the cottage, while their two brothers followed ; and perhaps there was never a congregation of happier faces went forth into the world, than those which then stood looking over fair France from the borders of Switzerland.

Maria Beauchamp turned towards the town ; but Blanche hesitated, and looked up to her brother.

William Delaware caught her glance immediately, and, straightforward as ever, came at once to the point. "The truth is, Beauchamp," he said, "it might be somewhat painful for us to go up to Poligny with you ; for, this morning, we learned a circumstance from our old housekeeper, which, in fact, kept us from coming down to Widow Harrison's at an earlier hour—though, indeed, I should personally care nothing about it."

"But what is it? What has happened now?" demanded Beauchamp, in the eager and apprehensive tone of one who fears that the cup of happiness just offered to his lip may be snatched away before he can drink. "What, in fortune's name, has occurred now?"

"Nothing of any consequence," answered Captain Delaware. "Only we understand—and you, who know all that has passed, will comprehend our feelings on the occasion—we understand that the Earl of Ashborough is here."

"He is, indeed, I am sorry to say," replied Beauchamp, pointing to the deep mourning that he wore. "But let us forget, I entreat, that any one who has ever borne the title that I now bear, felt differently from myself towards the name of Delaware."

Blanche looked up to heaven, and her lips moved ; but her cheek glowed eloquently again as Maria Beauchamp's hand clasped somewhat tighter upon her own, and she saw a smile, half sad, half playful, shining on her fair cousin's lip.

Still the whole party paused in silence ; for there was so much to be said that there was nothing said at all. Each heart was full of feelings that would have taken days to pour forth ; and at length William Delaware proposed the wisest thing for all parties, that they should part for that time, as night was coming on, and meet again the next morning.

"You know," he said, "what delight my father will have in seeing you, Beauchamp ; and, indeed, I feel as if we were wronging him in anticipating any part of all that we have to talk to you about. Yonder is our residence," he added, pointing to the identical château that Miss Beauchamp had fixed upon in entering the town ; "and I am sure I need not say that the sooner you come the greater will be the pleasure to us."

"I shall not be late," answered Beauchamp; "depend upon it, I shall not be late."

"But, Maria, you will come also," said Blanche, looking up in her cousin's face.

"Oh, certainly! dear Blanche," replied Miss Beauchamp; "as your brother can tell you, I am a very early person in my habits. You may expect to see me at six in the morning."

Captain Delaware smiled, and could have said something in reply; but as he began to divine that, whatever might be the result, he should have more than one opportunity of seeing Maria Beauchamp again, he reserved his rejoinder, and after another lingering pause, they parted.

"Henry, I admire your taste," said Miss Beauchamp, as they walked back to the inn; "she is a beautiful, sweet girl, indeed, and will do very well to make a countess of."

"Hush, hush, Maria!" said her brother. "Spare your raillery yet for a while. There is much to be got over, before we come to such conclusions as that. The game is yet to be played, and I will give you leave to laugh if I win."

"You will be a sad bungler, my dear brother, if you lose such a game as that," replied Miss Beauchamp; "for you have all the cards in your own hands; but let us arrange our plans, Harry. At whatsoever hour you please to-morrow, you take some vile beast of a horse from the inn, and ride over by yourself. I will come to breakfast at my own time in the carriage. Nay, I will have my way this time at least; for I do not choose to have any lover in the carriage with me—except it were one of my own."

Beauchamp yielded, of course; for there were more cogent arguments in his own breast in favour of his sister's plans, than any she thought fit to produce. He had now food enough for thought during the evening; but he did not forget to send for good Dr. Arnoux, from whom he received a confirmation of his worst apprehensions in regard to the widow's son. From that worthy man, also, he learned that it was at his suggestion that Captain Delaware, and Sir Sidney—who had been an old friend of his while he lived as an emigré at Emberton—had fixed their abode at Poligny, the retired situation of which, and its immediate proximity to both Switzerland and Germany, rendered it peculiarly advantageous under the circumstances in which they were placed for the time.

This conference ended, Beauchamp retired to bed, and obtained such sleep as lovers usually are supposed to gain while their fate is in suspense.

CHAPTER XLII.

A HORSE was easily procured, and early on the following morning Beauchamp was on his way to the château inhabited by Sir Sidney Delaware and his family. The house was, like most French houses of the kind, furnished with a court in the front, large iron gates, and a wide woody enclosure called a park, stretching up the side of the hill, full of straight alleys and mathematical walks.

At the corner of the enclosure, Beauchamp looked at his watch, and to his surprise found that it still wanted nearly half an hour of eight.

"This is very foolish of me," thought he, as he rode along the park wall—"I shall find no one up, and they will all think me mad." But at that moment, as he looked over the low wall and up one of the long alleys, he caught a view of two persons crossing the further extremity of it; and he was instantly satisfied that there were other wakeful people in the world as well as himself. "It is Blanche and her brother," he thought; and, riding up to the court, he flung his bridle to a boy who was standing there, and without further inquiry hastened into the park. The wood was somewhat labyrinthine; but Beauchamp had observed the direction taken by the figures he had seen, and following one of the cross alleys, he soon entered that wherein he had beheld them, and in which he found that they were still walking slowly on, about a hundred yards before him, unconscious that there was any one in the park but themselves.

As Captain Delaware was speaking eagerly and loud, Beauchamp, to avoid overhearing his conversation with his sister, hastened forward, pronouncing his name, and was almost immediately by their side. He was greeted by both with evident pleasure; but upon Blanche's cheek, though it was much paler than it had been in England, there was still that flickering blush, on which we have already written a long discussion.

After their first meeting was over, and Beauchamp had explained that his sister would be there in about an hour, of course all three, as they took a step or two slowly forward, felt themselves rather awkward. But William Delaware was fond of cutting Gordian knots; and the next moment, after a silent smile, as he glanced first at his cousin and then at Blanche, he abruptly let her arm slip from his own, and,

looking gaily into Beauchamp's face, he said, "Here, Henry, give Blanche your arm, while I go to tell my father that you are here."

His sister looked at him almost reproachfully, and proposed that they should all return; but Captain Delaware stayed not to listen, and the next moment she stood alone with Henry Beauchamp, with her trembling hand laid upon her lover's arm. Heaven knows what they said, for I am sure I do not; but doubtless it was something very extraordinary, for ere they had taken two steps forward, Beauchamp woke, and detected Blanche Delaware calling him "My lord."

"My lord!" he repeated. "My lord! Is such the cold title by which I am alone to be called? Oh, Blanche!"

Blanche found that she had got into a scrape; and as there was but one way of getting out of it in all the world, she took it at once. She paused, and though she was ready to sink where she stood, she raised her long eyelashes, and fixed her beautiful eyes upon her cousin's face for one single moment, with a glance that was worth all the Oriental love-letters that ever were composed—imploring, tender, full of gentleness and affection. It seemed to say, "Do not—do not overpower me—I am yours, heart, and soul, and mind—but my heart is so full, another word will break it."

Beauchamp read it all at once; and pressing her hand in both of his, he asked the very intelligible question, "Is it—is it mine, dear Blanche?"

"If you still wish it, Henry," she replied. "Can I refuse anything to the saviour of my brother's character, and the generous benefactor of our whole family?"

The spirit of perversity seized upon Beauchamp again in a moment; and he was not satisfied. "No, Blanche!—No!" he said; "I must win a dearer assurance than that. I will not owe to gratitude—little as I have deserved it—what I would fain owe to love. I must have a dearer assurance, or I shall think that the same Blanche Delaware who accepts Henry Beauchamp in France, would again refuse Henry Burrel if—unbacked by some pitiful service—he again stood by the Prior's Fountain."

Beauchamp's exacting mood gave Blanche the advantage; and by amusing her fancy, even for a single instant, got the better of a part of her agitation. She smiled, and was half inclined to triumph, for she felt that she could if she liked; but love was the more powerful motive, and she only misused her advantage by that one playful smile, and a few words like it. "I no more refused him then," she replied, "because he was Henry Burrel, than I now accept him because he is

Earl of Ashborough. Do you believe me, Henry?" she asked, after a pause.

"I do, indeed, dear Blanche," replied Beauchamp. "But you are smiling at me still; and, if you could tell all the agony, and long, long days of misery which that rejection caused me, I am sure you would pity the feelings that your words produced."

"I did from the first, Henry!" replied Blanche, earnestly; "but you must believe me, Henry, when I tell you, that I suffered double what you did. Yes, yes!" she added, seeing him shake his head—"Yes, yes, I did; for I was crushing my own heart at the very time I was obliged to crush that of him—of him—Oh, Henry, you do not know what I felt!"

"Obliged!" cried Beauchamp, catching at the word. "Obliged! Did Sir Sidney, then, object?"

"No!" answered Blanche; "nor would have objected. But it shall all be explained, Henry, if you can forgive me, and love me still, notwithstanding all the pain I have made you suffer."

"I have loved you ever, Blanche, with the most unabated affection," replied Beauchamp. "Nay, more, what between affection, and what between vanity, I had fancied that there must be some latent cause for conduct that seemed inexplicable. I had endeavoured for some time so to frame my every word and action towards you, that you could not mistake them; and it was only because you permitted those attentions—because they did not seem to displease you"—(Blanche blushed deeply)—"because, in short, you did not repel them, that I dared to hope. I would not—I could not, believe that such a heart and such a mind as that of Blanche Delaware would suffer me to go on so long unchecked, if she felt that the affection she must have seen could not be returned."

"Indeed, I would not!" replied Blanche. "I do not pretend not to have seen what were your feelings towards me, and it is no use now of concealing what were my own,"—and, for a moment, her eyes again sought the ground. "The fact was, however," she added, smiling, "that what happened afterwards was not because you were Mr. Burrel, but because I discovered you were Mr. Beauchamp."

"And was that name, then, so hateful to you?" asked her lover.

"No, no!" answered Blanche. "But I see I may as well tell you at once, for you will not cease to question me till I do. Do you remember the last day you ever came up to the park? Well, just after your arrival the post came in,

and amongst other things were two leters to me—one from Mrs. Darlington, and another which made me run to my own room as soon as I had opened it. It was from your uncle, the late Lord Ashborough. I scarcely like to think of it even now. It told me who you really were, and in terms—oh, so bitter!—hinted that I must know it already, and must be using that knowledge for evil purposes. It then went on to state, that, however determined you might be in the foolish line of conduct you were pursuing, your relations would never forgive our union; and that if it took place, he, Lord Ashborough, would not only disown you as his relation, but would leave every acre of land which he could alienate, to the most distant relation he had, sooner than to you. The whole was wound up with the same denunciation against you, in case I ever revealed to you the fact of my having received that letter; and it ended with telling me, that now, knowing these facts, I might still strive to force myself into your family if I would——But I will show you the letter, Henry, and you shall judge for yourself whether I could do otherwise."

"He might, indeed, have alienated a large part of his property," replied Beauchamp; "but there was still more than enough left. And did you think, Blanche, from what you knew of me even then, that I would not have preferred a cottage with you, to ten times the amount he could have taken away without you?"

"Henry Beauchamp in a cottage!" said Blanche, smiling. "I am afraid that would have suited Blanche Delaware better. But remember, Henry, that I knew not what he could take from you; and even if I had known, should I have had any right to accept, to permit, such a sacrifice? Oh, no! and if it had broken my heart, I must have acted as I did act. But now, Henry, let us return home; we have walked on long, and papa will certainly think it strange that I have been thus left alone with you at all."

"He shall soon have a good reason, dear Blanche," replied her lover; "and I trust that we shall never—never part again."

Beauchamp found Sir Sidney Delaware more shaken by all he had undergone than he had anticipated; but the baronet's delight at seeing his young cousin, he declared, took twenty years from the load of age. "Your father, my dear Harry," he said, "was my school and college companion, and the constant friend of my heart. I thought, when first I saw you at Emberton, that your face, and voice, and manner, were all as familiar to me as household words. But why, Harry—why did you not tell me your real name—especially

when you came plotting such a service as you afterwards rendered me?"

"Because, my dear sir," replied Beauchamp, "when I wrote to you, a few years before, you showed no disposition to receive me in my real character."

"That was because you refused my first invitation, just after your father's death," answered Sir Sidney.

"I never received it," replied the Earl; "I never received it, upon my honour—but I am afraid, my dear sir, that there has been more than one juggle in the business, which we had better perhaps consign to oblivion altogether; and now, let me take advantage of your daughter's absence to make one request. You now know me, Sir Sidney—my principles, my mind, my heart, and my situation—can you trust Blanche's happiness to my care?—will you give me her hand?"

Sir Sidney Delaware started up. "I have been blind to the last!" he cried; "I have been blind to the last! But think, Henry! remember what you are about! Take back your request; and, ere you make it again, call to mind your rank and prospects; and judge whether interest, or ambition, or the world's smile, may never hereafter induce you to regret that you have married a portionless girl, because she had a fair face and a gentle heart."

"Never! Sir Sidney," replied the Earl. "It requires no thought. Interest, and ambition, and the world's smile, have never had any effect upon me yet, and never shall have while my faculties remain."

"Well, well," replied Sir Sidney, "I have not forgotten that you do not 'worship any man for the money in his purse, nor bow low to the bottle of Lafitte upon his sideboard.' So, if your mind be really made up, you must ask Blanche herself; but by William's smiling, I fancy you have settled that matter between you already. If so, God's blessing and mine upon you both; and you shall have my consent on one sole condition, which is, that you will explain to me, clearly and distinctly, all the particulars of this business from beginning to end—for I confess I sometimes begin to think that my intellect is impaired, because I cannot get it clearly stated in my own head. But stay, here are a number of questions which I have written down in pencil on the broad margin of my Seneca, intending to ask William. Will you undergo the catechism instead?"

"Willingly!" answered Beauchamp; "and as I see Maria's carriage coming slowly up the hill from the town, we shall just have time, I dare say, to get through your questions before she breaks in upon us with her gay pertness."

"She shall be most welcome," said Sir Sidney; and then,

with spectacles on nose, and book in hand, he proceeded to read the interrogatories with which he had charged the margin of his Seneca, and thus Beauchamp was called upon to explain a great deal that the worthy reader, who has walked hand in hand along with him through the book, already understands full well.

"And now then, tell me," continued Sir Sidney, after he had dispatched a great number of his questions; "how did you contrive to place the money so cleverly in William's room at Emberton, without any one seeing you?"

"The fact is, my dear sir," answered Beauchamp, "that I knew the house and all its passages, as well as, if not better, than any of you. You must remember, that a great part of my boyhood was spent there, and a thousand times, under my incognito name of Burrel, I had nearly betrayed my acquaintance with every room in the building. I had seen, in walking round the house, that the door of the well-vault, as it used to be called, was always open; and when I wanted to place the money in your son's room without being seen, I resolved to try the little staircase, up and down which I had often played at hide-and-seek. I thus made my way to the trap-door, when, to my surprise and mortification, I found it nailed. As, however, it shook under my hand when I tried it, I resolved to make a strong effort to push it open, in which I succeeded, the nail either breaking or coming out, I did not stay to examine which. My hand, however, was torn in doing so; and, unfortunately, a drop of blood fell upon one of the notes, as I folded them up in a sheet of paper I found upon the table. The packet I directed as well as I could by the moonlight, and I then put down the money and went away as fast as I could."

"That just brings me to my last question," said Sir Sidney, "and here is your sister driving into the court; so tell me why it was you did not rather give the money into my hands, or William's, or Blanche's, or any one's, rather than risk it in such a situation?"

Beauchamp laughed, and turning towards Miss Delaware, who was just then re-entering the room, he replied, "Really, Sir Sidney, I must refuse to plead—you must ask Blanche."

"Well then, you tell me, my love," continued the baronet, turning to his daughter, "What could your cousin's reason be for putting the money, that has caused us so much anxiety, into William's room that night, rather than giving it to me or you, as it seems he knew that William was out?"

Beauchamp and Captain Delaware both smiled, and Blanche blushed deeply, but was silent.

"So, so!" said Sir Sidney. "Is it so? Well, well, I stop

my questions there—William, run out and welcome your fair cousin! Blanche, give me your hand—there, Henry, take her; and may she ever be to you as dear, as gentle, as good, and as beloved a wife, as her mother was to me."

There was but little more now to be explained; though Sir Sidney, in reward for the young Earl's patience under cross-examination, took great pains to make him understand how his son William had found means, through their poor pensioner, Widow Harrison herself, to communicate to the family his safe arrival in France, and a plan for their meeting, which had been immediately adopted—how they had skilfully contrived to conceal their route—and how their good old friend Arnoux had prevailed upon them to pause at Poligny, instead of going on to Sicily, as they had at first intended.

From Widow Harrison, too, to whose faith and gratitude they could trust, and to whom alone their place of residence had been communicated, they had learned by letter many of Beauchamp's efforts in their favour, as well as their success and the ultimate result of the trial; but still, although they had heard so much, there was yet matter enough left to be told on both sides, to furnish forth many a story for the bright fireside.

Nothing more remains for the writer, to whom their own lips kindly furnished the materials for composing this book, than to add that a very few months afterwards, at the chapel of the British Ambassador at Paris, Henry Earl of Ashborough was married to Blanche, only daughter of Sir Sidney Delaware; and that the body of poor Walter Harrison sleeps by the side of the Lake of Geneva.

Nevertheless, it behoves us to record one serious dispute which took place between the young Earl of Ashborough and Sir Sidney Delaware, which was occasioned by the baronet insisting that his noble son-in-law should take a mortgage upon the Emberton estate for the amount of the twenty-five thousand pounds advanced by him to pay off the former annuity.

On the other hand, however, it appeared that the late Earl had been, at the moment of his death, in the prosecution of a suit to prove that the annuity had not been legally paid off. It was true, also, that Beauchamp had received the five-and-twenty thousand pounds back again from Mr. Tims, and that the annuity had been paid up to the very last day of the late Earl's life. Beauchamp, therefore, contended that he had no right whatever to demand or accept any mortgage, as the money had returned to his own possession, and the annuity must be considered to have lapsed with the life of his uncle.

Sir Sidney would not see it in this point of view, and a great deal of good-humoured special pleading went on upon

the subject between him and the Earl. How it would all have ended, Heaven only knows, had not Maria Beauchamp, who had got safely over the critical epoch of her brother's marriage, and even held out for four months after, while he brought his fair bride to England, and made her look into an English court for one moment—which was quite enough for both of them—had she not, I say, at the end of the time, broken the hearts of her nine London admirers, young and old, by giving her hand to William Delaware. She protested, indeed, that she only did it for convenience, as her brother and Blanche, with Sir Sidney, his son, and herself, were about to take a long rambling tour over one quarter of the world, and she could not, of course, go so many thousand miles with a young single man, without giving employment to the tongues of her acquaintances.

However that might be, to end the dispute about the twenty-five thousand pounds, the Earl insisted upon adding it to his sister's fortune, which was already sufficient to clear off every incumbrance, and leave the family of Delaware more prosperous than it had been for nearly a century before.

We could go on a long time, and write another volume upon Blanche's happy looks, and tell how Beauchamp, contented in his love, weaned himself from many of his perversities and caprices, without losing the brighter and the nobler qualities of his character. Nor would adventures be wanting, nor the same light and idle nothings of which this book is already principally composed; but, unfortunately, having called the Work "THE RUINED FAMILY," we find ourselves bound to close it here, now that we can no longer apply that term to the house of DELAWARE.

THE END.

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